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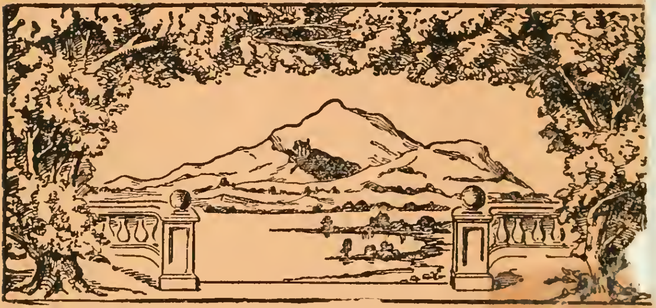

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DEDICATION.

TO

MISS MARIE WILTON

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THIS COMEDY IS DEDICATED

BY

HER GRATEFUL FRIEND AND FELLOW LABOURER,

THE AUTHOR.

CASTE.

Produced at the Prince of Wales's Royal Theatre, London, on Saturday, April 6th, 1867.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Hon. George D'Alroy	MR. FREDERICK YOUNGE.
Captain Hawtree	MR. BANCROFT.
Eccles	MR. GEORGE HONEY.
Sam Gerridge	MR. HARE.
Dixon	MR. HILL.
Marquise de St. Maur	MISS LARKIN.
Esther Eccles	MISS LYDIA FOOTE.
Polly Eccles	MISS MARIE WILTON.

ACT I.—*The Little House in Stangate.*—COURTSHIP.
A lapse of eight months.

ACT II.—*The Lodgings in Mayfair.*—MATRIMONY.
A lapse of twelve months.

ACT III.—*The Little House in Stangate.*—WIDOWHOOD.

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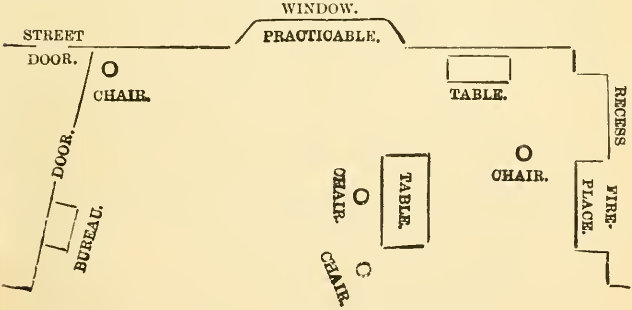
CASTE.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A plain set chamber, paper soiled. A window,* C., *with practicable blind; street backing and iron railings. Door practicable, 3rd* E.R., *when opencd showing street door (practicable). Fireplace,* C. *of* L.H. *piece; two-hinged gas-burners on each side of mantel-piece. Side-board cupboard, cupboard in recess, 3rd* E.L., *tea-things, teapot, tea-caddy, tea-tray, &c., on it. Long table,* L.C., *before fire; old piece of carpet and rug down; plain chairs; book-shelf back,* L.H., *a small table under it with ballet-shoe and skirt on it; bunch of benefit bills hanging under book-shelf. Theatrical printed portraits, framed, hanging about; chimney glass clock; box of lucifers and ornaments on mantel-shelf; kettle on hob, and fire laid; door-mats on the outside of door. Bureau* C *of* R.H. *piece. See Diagram.*



Rapping heard at door, R., *the handle is then shaken as curtain rises. The door is unlocked. Enter* GEORGE D'ALROY.

GEO. Told you so; the key was left under the mat in case I came. They're not back from rehearsal. (*hangs up hat on peg near door as* HAWTREE *enters*) Confound rehearsal! (*crosses to fire-place*)

HAW. (C. *of stage, back to audience, looking round*) And this is the fairy's bower!

GEO. Yes! And this is the fairy's fireplace; the fire is laid. I'll light it.

(*lights fire with lucifer from mantel-piece*)

HAW. (*turning to* GEORGE) And this is the abode rendered blessed by her abiding. It is here that she dwells, walks, talks—eats and drinks. Does she eat and drink?

GEO. Yes, heartily. I've seen her.

HAW. And you are really spoons!—case of true love—hit—dead.

GEO. Right through. Can't live away from her.

(*with elbow on end of mantel-piece down stage*)

HAW. Poor old Dal! and you've brought me over the water to——

GEO. Stangate.

HAW. Stangate—to see her for the same sort of reason that when a patient is in a dangerous state one doctor calls in another—for a consultation.

GEO. Yes. Then the patient dies.

HAW. Tell us all about it—you know I've been away.

(*sits* R. *of table, leg on a chair*)

GEO. Well, then, eighteen months ago——

HAW. Oh, cut that; you told me all about that. You went to a theatre, and saw a girl in a ballet, and you fell in love.

GEO. Yes. I found out that she was an amiable, good girl.

HAW. Of course; cut that. We'll credit her with all the virtues and accomplishments.

GEO. Who worked hard to support a drunken father.

HAW. Oh! the father's a drunkard, is he? The father does not inherit the daughter's virtues?

GEO. No. I hate him.

HAW. Naturally. Quite so! quite so!

GEO. And she—that is, Esther—is very good to her younger sister.

HAW. Younger sister also angelic, amiable, accomplished, &c., &c.

GEO. Um—good enough, but got a temper—large temper. Well, with some difficulty I got to speak to her. I mean to Esther. Then I was allowed to see her to her door here.

HAW. I know—pastry-cooks—Richmond dinner—and all that.

GEO. You're too fast. Pastry-cooks—yes. Richmond—no. Your knowledge of the world, fifty yards round barracks, misleads you. I saw her nearly every day, and I kept on falling in love—falling and falling, till I thought I should never reach the bottom; then I met you.

HAW. I remember the night when you told me; but I thought it was only an amourette. However, if the fire is a conflagration, subdue it; try dissipation.

GEO. I have.

HAW. What success?

GEO. None; dissipation brought me bad health and self-contempt, a sick head and a sore heart.

HAW. Foreign travel; absence makes the heart grow (*slight pause*)—stronger. Get leave and cut away.

GEO. I did get leave, and I did cut away; and while away, I was miserable and a gone-er coon than ever.

HAW. What's to be done?

(*sits cross-legged on chair, facing* GEORGE)

GEO. Don't know. That's the reason I asked you to come over and see.

HAW. Of course, Dal, you're not such a soft as to think of marriage. You know what your mother is. Either you are going to behave properly, with a proper regard for the world, and all that, you know; or you're going to do the other thing. Now, the question is, what do you mean to do? The girl is a nice girl, no doubt; but as to your making her Mrs. D'Alroy, the thing is out of the question.

GEO. Why? What should prevent me?

HAW. Caste!—the inexorable law of caste! The social law, so becoming and so good, that commands like to mate with like, and forbids a giraffe to fall in love with a squirrel.

GEO. But my dear Bark——

HAW. My dear Dal, all those marriages of people with common people are all very well in novels and in plays on the stage, because the real people don't exist, and have no relatives who exist, and no connections, and so no harm's done, and it's rather interesting to look at; but in real life with real relations, and real mothers, and so forth, it's absolute bosh. It's worse—it's utter social and personal annihilation and damnation.

GEO. As to my mother, I haven't thought about her.

(*sits corner of table*, L.)

HAW. Of course not. Lovers are so damned selfish; they never think of anybody but themselves.

GEO. My father died when I was three years old, and she married again before I was six, and married a Frenchman.

HAW. A nobleman of the most ancient families in France, of equal blood to her own. She obeyed the duties imposed on her by her station and by caste.

GEO. Still, it caused a separation and a division between us, and I never see my brother, because he lives abroad. Of course the Marquise de St. Maur is my mother, and I look upon her with a sort of superstitious awe.

Moves chair with which he has been twisting about during speech from R. *of table, to corner* L.

HAW. She's a grand Brahmin priestess.

GEO. Just so; and I know I'm a fool. Now you're clever, Bark—a little too clever, I think. You're paying your *devoirs*—that the correct word, isn't it—to Lady Florence Carberry, the daughter of a countess. She's above you—you've no title. Is she to forget *her* caste?

HAW. That argument doesn't apply. A man can be no more than a gentleman.

GEO. "True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

HAW. Now, George, if you're going to consider this question from the point of view of poetry, you're off to No Man's Land, where I won't follow you.

GEO. No gentleman can be ashamed of the woman he loves. No matter what her original station, once his wife he raises her to his rank.

HAW. Yes, he raises her—*her*; but her connections—her relatives. How about them?

ECCLES *enters*, D.R.

ECCLES. (*outside*) Polly! Polly! (*enters*) Why the devil——

GEORGE *crosses to* HAWTREE, *who rises.* ECCLES *sees them, and assumes a deferential manner.*

ECCLES. Oh, Mr. De-Alroy! I didn't see you, sir. Good afternoon; the same to you, sir, and many on 'em.

(*puts hat on bureau and comes down* R.H.)

HAW. Who is this?

GEO. This is papa.

HAW. Ah!

Turns up to book-shelf, scanning ECCLES *through eye-glass.*

GEO. Miss Eccles and her sister not returned from rehearsal yet?

ECCLES. No, sir, they have not. I expect 'em in directly. I hope you've been quite well since I seen you last, sir?

GEO. Quite, thank you; and how have you been, Mr. Eccles?

ECCLES. Well, sir, I have not been the thing at all. My 'elth, sir, and my spirits is both broke. I'm not the man I used to be. I am not accustomed to this sort of thing. I've seen better days, but they are gone—most like for ever. It is a melancholy thing, sir, for a man of my time of life to look back on better days that are gone most like for ever.

GEO. I dare say.

ECCLES. Once proud and prosperous, now poor and lowly. Once master of a shop, I am now, by the pressure of circumstances over which I have no control, driven to seek work and not to find it. Poverty is a dreadful thing, sir, for a man as has once been well off.

GEO. I dare say.

ECCLES. (*sighing*) Ah, sir, the poor and lowly is often 'ardly used. What chance has the working man?

HAW. None when he don't work.

ECCLES. We are all equal in mind and feeling.

GEO. (*aside*) I hope not.

ECCLES. I am sorry, gentlemen, that I cannot offer you any refreshment; but luxury and me has long been strangers.

GEO. I am very sorry for your misfortunes, Mr. Eccles. (*looking round at* HAWTREE, *who turns away*) May I hope that you will allow me to offer you this trifling loan?

(*giving him a half-sovereign*)

ECCLES. Sir, you're a gentleman. One can tell a real gentleman with half a sov—I mean with half a eye—a real gentleman understands the natural emotions of the working man. Pride, sir, is a thing as should be put down by the strong 'and of pecuniary necessity. There's a friend of mine round the corner as I promised to meet on a little matter of business; so, if you will excuse me, sir——

GEO. With pleasure.

ECCLES. (*going up*, R.) Sorry to leave you, gentlemen, but——

GEO. } Don't stay on my account.
HAW. } Don't mention it.

ECCLES. Business is business. (*goes up*, D.R.) The girls will be in directly. Good afternoon, gentlemen—good afternoon—(*going out*)—good afternoon!

(*Exit*, D.R. GEORGE *sits in chair corner of table* R.)

HAW. (*coming down* L. *of table*) Papa is not nice, but (*sitting on corner of table, down stage*)—

"True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

Poor George! I wonder what your mamma—the Most Noble the Marquise de St. Maur—would think of Papa Eccles. Come, Dal, allow that there *is something* in caste. Conceive that dirty ruffian—that rinsing of stale beer—that walking tap-room, for a father-in-law. Take a spin to Central America. Forget her.

GEO. Can't.

HAW. You'll be wretched and miserable with her.

GEO. I'd rather be wretched with her, than miserable without her. (HAWTREE *takes out cigar case*) Don't smoke here!

HAW. Why not?

GEO. She'll be coming in directly.

HAW. I don't think she'd mind.

GEO. I should. Do you smoke before Lady Florence Carberry?

HAW. (*closing case*) Ha! You're suffering from a fit of the morals.

GEO. What's that?

HAW. The morals is a disease like the measles, that attacks the young and innocent.

GEO. (*with temper*) You talk like Mephistopheles, without the cleverness.

(*goes up to window, and looks at watch*)

HAW. (*arranging cravat at glass*) I don't pretend to be a particularly good sort of fellow, nor a particularly bad sort of fellow. I suppose I'm about the average standard sort of thing, and I don't like to see a friend go down hill to the devil while I can put the drag on. (*turning, with back to fire*) Here is a girl of very humble station—poor, and all that, with a drunken father, who evidently doesn't care

how he gets money so long as he don't work for it. Marriage! Pah! Couldn't the thing be arranged?

GEO. Hawtree, cut that! (*at window*) She's here! (*goes to door and opens it*)

Enter ESTHER, D.R.H.

GEO. (*flurried at sight of her*) Good morning. I got here before you, you see.

ESTHER. (R. 1) Good morning.

Sees HAWTREE—*slight pause, in which* HAWTREE *has removed his hat.*

GEO. (R. 2) I've taken the liberty—I hope you won't be angry—of asking you to let me present a friend of mine to you: Miss Eccles—Captain Hawtree.

HAWTREE *bows.* GEORGE *assists* ESTHER *in taking off bonnet and shawl.*

HAW. (R. L., *aside*) Pretty.

ESTHER. (*aside*) Thinks too much of himself.

GEO. (*hangs up bonnet and shawl on pegs*) You've had a late rehearsal. Where's Polly?

ESTHER. She stayed behind to buy something.

Enter POLLY, D.R.H.

POLLY. (R.) Hallo! (*head through door*) How de do, Mr. D'Alroy? Oh! I'm tired to death. Kept at rehearsal by an old fool of a stage manager. But stage managers are always old fools—except when they are young. We shan't have time for any dinner, so I've brought something for tea.

ESTHER. What is it?

POLLY. Ham. (*showing ham in paper.* ESTHER *sits* R. *at window. Crossing* R.C. *Seeing* HAWTREE)! Oh I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't see you.

GEO. A friend of mine, Mary. Captain Hawtree—Miss Mary Eccles. (GEORGE *sits* L. *at window*)

POLLY *bows very low,* 1 R., 2 L., 3 C., *half burlesquely, to* HAWTREE.

HAW. Charmed.

Polly. (*aside*) What a swell! Got nice teeth, and he knows it. How quiet we all are; let's talk about something.

Hangs up her hat. She crosses to fire L., *round table-front.* HAWTREE *crosses and places hat on bureau.*

ESTHER. (R.C.) What can we talk about?

POLLY. Anything. Ham. Mr. D'Alroy, do you like ham?

GEO. I adore her—(POLLY *titters*)—I mean I adore it.

POLLY. (*to* HAWTREE, *who has crossed to table* R., *watching* POLLY *undo paper containing the ham. She turns the plate on top of the ham still in the paper, then throws the paper aside and triumphantly brings the plate under* HAWTREE'S *nose*, HAWTREE *giving a little start back*) Do you like ham, sir? (*very tragically*)

HAW. Yes.

POLLY. Now that is very strange. I should have thought you'd have been above ham. (*getting tea-tray*)

HAW. May one ask why?

POLLY. You look above it. You look quite equal to tongue—glazed. (*laughing*) Mr. D'Alroy is here so often that he knows our ways.

Getting tea-things from sideboard and placing them on table.

HAW. I like everything that is piquante and fresh, and pretty and agreeable.

POLLY. (*laying table all the time for tea*) Ah! you mean that for me. (*curtseying*) Oh! (*sings*) Tra, la, lal, la, la, la. (*flourishes cup in his face; he retreats a step*) Now I must put the kettle on. (GEORGE *and* ESTHER *are at window*) Esther never does any work when Mr. D'Alroy is here. They're spooning; ugly word spooning, isn't it?—reminds one of red-currant jam. By-the-bye, love *is* very like red-currant jam—at the first taste sweet, and afterwards shuddery. Do you ever spoon?

HAW. (*leaning across table*) I should like to do so at this moment.

POLLY. I dare say you would. No, you're too grand for me. You want taking down a peg—I mean a foot. Let's see—what are you—a corporal?

HAW. Captain.

POLLY. I prefer a corporal. See here. Let's change about. You be corporal—it'll do you good, and I'll be "my lady."

HAW. Pleasure.

POLLY. You must call me "my lady," though, or you shan't have any ham.

HAW. Certainly, "my lady"; but I cannot accept your hospitality, for I'm engaged to dine.

POLLY. At what time?

HAW. Seven.

POLLY. Seven! Why, that's half-past tea-time. Now corporal, you must wait on me.

HAW. As the pages did of old.

POLLY. My lady.

HAW. My lady.

POLLY. Here's the kettle, corporal.

Holding out kettle at arm's length. HAWTREE *looks at it through eye-glass.*

HAW. Very nice kettle!

POLLY. Take it into the back kitchen.

HAW. Eh!

POLLY. Oh! I'm coming too.

HAW. Ah! that alters the case.

He takes out handkerchief and then takes hold of kettle—crosses to R. *as* GEORGE *rises and comes down, slapping* HAWTREE *on back.* HAWTREE *immediately places kettle on the floor.* POLLY *throws herself into chair by fire-side up stage, and roars with laughter.* GEORGE *and* ESTHER *laugh.*

GEO. What are you about?

HAW. I'm about to fill the kettle.

ESTHER. (*going to* POLLY) Mind what you are doing, Polly! What will Sam say?

POLLY. Whatever Sam chooses. What the sweetheart don't see the husband can't grieve at. Now then—Corporal!

HAW. "My lady!" (*takes up kettle*)

POLLY. Attention! Forward! March! and mind the soot don't drop upon your trousers.

Exeunt POLLY *and* HAWTREE, *door* R., HAWTREE *first.*

ESTHER. What a girl it is—all spirits! The worst is that it is so easy to mistake her.

GEO. And so easy to find out your mistake. (*they cross to* L., *down stage,* ESTHER *first*) But why won't you let me present you with a piano? (*following* ESTHER)

ESTHER. I don't want one.

GEO. You said you were fond of playing.

ESTHER. We may be fond of many things without having them. (*leaning against end of table. Taking out*

letter) Now here is a gentleman says that he is attached to me.

GEO. (*jealous*) May I know his name?

ESTHER. What for? It would be useless, as his solicitations—— (*throws letter into fire*)

GEO. I lit that fire.

ESTHER. Then burn these too. (GEORGE *crosses to fire*) No, not that. (*taking one back*) I must keep that; burn the others.

GEORGE *throws letter on fire, crosses back of table quickly—takes hat from peg and goes to door as if leaving hurriedly.* ESTHER *takes chair* R. *of table and goes* C. *with it, noticing* GEORGE'S *manner.* GEORGE *hesitates at door. Shuts it quickly, hangs his hat up again and comes down to back of chair in which* ESTHER *has seated herself.*

GEO. (L.C. 1) Who is that from?

ESTHER. (L.C. 2) Why do you wish to know?

GEO. Because I love you, and I don't think you love me, and I fear a rival.

ESTHER. You have none.

GEO. I know you have so many admirers.

ESTHER. They're nothing to me.

GEO. Not one?

ESTHER. No. They're admirers, but there's not a husband among them.

GEO. Not the writer of that letter?

ESTHER. Oh, I like him very much. (*coquettishly*)

GEO. Ah! (*sighing*)

ESTHER. And I'm very fond of this letter.

GEO. Then, Esther, you don't care for me.

ESTHER. Don't I! How do you know?

GEO. Because you won't let me read that letter.

ESTHER. It won't please you if you see it.

GEO. I dare say not. That's just the reason that I want to. You won't?

ESTHER. (*hesitates*) I will. There! (*giving it to him*)

GEO. (*reads*) "Dear Madam."

ESTHER. That's tender, isn't it?

GEO. "The terms are four pounds—your dresses to be found. For eight weeks certain, and longer if you should suit. (GEORGE, L., *in astonishment*) I cannot close the engagement until the return of my partner. I

expect him back to-day, and will write you as soon as I have seen him.—Yours very," &c. Four pounds—find dresses. What does this mean?

Esther. It means that they want a Columbine for the pantomime at Manchester, and I think I shall get the engagement.

Geo. Manchester; then you'll leave London!

Esther. I must. (*pathetically*) You see this little house is on my shoulders. Polly only earns eighteen shillings a week, and father has been out of work a long, long time. I make the bread here, and it's hard to make sometimes. I've been mistress of this place, and forced to think ever since my mother died, and I was eight years old. Four pounds a week is a large sum, and I can save out of it.

This speech is not to be spoken in a tone implying hardship.

Geo. But you'll go away, and I shan't see you.

Esther. P'raps it will be for the best. (*rises and crosses* L.) What future is there for us? You're a man of rank, and I am a poor girl who gets her living by dancing. It would have been better that we had never met.

Geo. No.

Esther. Yes, it would, for I'm afraid that——

Geo. You love me?

Esther. I don't know. I'm not sure; but I think I do. (*stops* L. *and turns half-face to* George)

Geo. (*trying to seize her hand*) Esther!

Esther. No. Think of the difference of our stations.

Geo. That's what Hawtree says. Caste! caste! curse caste! (*goes up* C.)

Esther. If I go to Manchester it will be for the best. We must both try to forget each other.

Geo. (*comes down* L. *and* L. *of table*) Forget you! no, Esther; let me—— (*seizing her hand*)

Polly. (*without*) Mind what you're about. Oh dear! oh dear! (George *and* Esther *sit in window seat*)

Enter Polly *and* Hawtree, D.R.

Polly. You nasty, great, clumsy, corporal, you've spilt the water all over my frock. Oh dear! (*coming down*, R.C. Hawtree *puts kettle on ham on table*) Take it off the ham!

(Hawtree *then places it on the mantel-piece*)

Polly. No, no ; put it in the fireplace (Hawtree *does so*) You've spoilt my frock. (*sitting* c.)

Haw. Allow me to offer you a new one.

(*crossing to* l.c.)

Polly. No, I won't. You'll be calling to see how it looks when it's on. Haven't you got a handkerchief?

Haw. Yes!

Polly. Then wipe it dry.

Hawtree *bends almost on one knee, and wipes dress, on her* l.h. *Enter* Sam, *whistling, door* r. *Throws cap into* Hawtree's *hat on drawers.*

Sam. (*sulkily*) Arternoon—yer didn't hear me knock! —the door was open. I'm afraid I intrude.

Polly. No, you don't. We're glad to see you if you've got a handkerchief. Help to wipe this dry.

Sam *pulls out handkerchief from slop, and dropping on one knee snatches skirt of dress from* Hawtree, *who looks up surprised.*

Haw. I'm very sorry. (*rising*) I beg your pardon.

(*business ;* Sam *stares* Hawtree *out*)

Polly. It won't spoil it.

Sam. The stain won't come out. (*rising*)

Polly. It's only water!

Sam. Arternoon, Miss Eccles! (*to* Esther) Arternoon, sir! (*to* George. Polly *rises*) Who's the other swell?

(*to* Polly)

Polly. I'll introduce you. (Sam r. Polly c. Hawtree l.) Captain Hawtree—Mr. Samuel Gerridge.

Haw. Charmed, I'm sure. (*staring at* Sam *through eye-glass.* Sam *acknowledges* Hawtree's *recognition by a "chuck" of the head over left shoulder; going up to* George) Who's this?

Geo. Polly's sweetheart.

Haw. Oh! Now if I can be of no further assistance, I'll go. (*comes over back down* r. *to drawers*)

Polly. Going, corporal?

Haw. Yaas! (*business ; taking up hat and stick from bureau he sees* Sam's *cap. He picks it out carefully, and coming down stage* r. *examines it as a curiosity, drops it on the floor and pushes it away with his stick, at the same time*

moving backwards, causing him to bump against SAM, *who turns round savagely*) I beg your pardon! (*crossing up stage*) George, will you—(GEORGE *takes no notice*) Will you——

GEO. What?

HAW. Go with me?

GEO. Go? No!

HAW. (*coming down* C. *to* POLLY L.) Then, Miss Eccles—I mean "my lady."

> *Shaking hands and going; as he backs away bumps against* SAM, *and business repeated.* HAWTREE *close to door* R., *keeping his eye on* SAM, *who has shown signs of anger.*

POLLY. Good bye, corporal!

HAW. (*at door*) Good bye! Good afternoon, Mr.—Mr.—er—Pardon me.

SAM. (*with constrained rage*) Gerridge, sir. Gerridge!

HAW. (*as if remembering name*) Ah! Gerridge. Good day.

(*Exit* D.R.F.)

SAM. (*turning to* POLLY *in awful rage*) Who's that fool? Who's that long idiot?

POLLY. I told you; Captain Hawtree.

SAM. What's 'e want 'ere?

POLLY. He's a friend of Mr. D'Alroy's.

SAM. Ugh! Isn't one of 'em enough?

POLLY. What do you mean?

SAM. For the neighbours to talk about. Who's he after?

POLLY. What do you mean by after? You're forgetting yourself, I think.

SAM. No, I'm not forgetting myself—I'm remembering you. What can a long fool of a swell dressed up to the nines within an inch of his life want with two girls of your class? Look at the difference of your stations! 'E don't come 'ere after any good.

> *During the speech,* ESTHER *crosses to fire and sits before it in a low chair.* GEORGE *follows her, and sits on her* L.

POLLY. Samuel!

SAM. I mean what I say. People should stick to their own class. Life's a railway journey, and Mankind's a passenger—first class, second class, third class. Any person found riding in a superior class to that for which he has

taken his ticket will be removed at the first station stopped at, according to the bye-laws of the company. (R.C.)

POLLY. You're giving yourself nice airs! What business is it of yours who comes here? Who are you? (L.C.)

SAM. I'm a mechanic. (R.C.)

POLLY. That's evident.

SAM. I ain't ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed of my paper cap.

POLLY. Why should you be? I dare say Captain Hawtree isn't ashamed of his fourteen-and-sixpenny gossamer.

SAM. You think a deal of him 'cos he's a captain. Why did he call you my lady?

POLLY. Because he treated me as one. I wish you'd make the same mistake!

SAM. Ugh!

> SAM *goes angrily to bureau*, POLLY *bounces up stage, and sits in window seat.*

ESTHER. (*sitting with* GEORGE, *tête-à-tête, by fire*) But we must listen to reason.

GEO. I hate reason!

ESTHER. I wonder what it means?

GEO. Everything disagreeable! When people talk unpleasantly, they always say listen to reason.

SAM. (*turning round*) What will the neighbours say!

POLLY. I don't care! (*coming down* C.)

SAM. What will the neighbours *think?*

POLLY. They can't think. They're like you, they've not been educated up to it.

SAM. It all comes of your being on the stage.

(*going to* POLLY)

POLLY. It all comes of your not understanding the stage or anything else—but putty. Now, if you were a gentleman——

SAM. Why then, of course, I should make up to a lady!

POLLY. Ugh!

> POLLY *flings herself into chair* R. *of table.* SAM *down* R.

GEO. Reason's an idiot! Two and two are four, and twelve are fifteen, and eight are twenty. That's reason!

SAM. (*turning to* POLLY) Painting your cheeks!

POLLY. (*rising*) Better paint our *cheeks* than paint

nasty old doors as you do. How can you understand art? You're only a mechanic! you're not a professional. You're in trade. You are not of the same station that we are. When the manager speaks to you, you touch your hat, and say, "Yes, sir," because he's your superior.

(*snaps fingers under* SAM'S *nose*)

GEO. When people love there's no such thing as money —it don't exist.

ESTHER. Yes, it does.

GEO. Then it oughtn't to.

SAM. The manager employs me same as he does you. Payment is good everywhere and anywhere. Whatever's commercial, is right.

POLLY. Actors are not like mechanics. They wear cloth coats, and not fustian jackets.

SAM. I despise play actors.

(*sneeringly, in* POLLY'S *face*)

POLLY. And I despise mechanics.

(POLLY *slaps his face*)

GEO. I never think of anything else but you.

ESTHER. Really?

SAM. (*goes to bureau, misses cap, looks around, sees it on floor, picks it up angrily and comes to* POLLY, *who is sitting chair* R. *of table*) I won't stay here to be insulted.

(*putting on cap*)

POLLY. Nobody wants you to stay. Go! Go! Go!

SAM. I will go. Good bye, Miss Mary Eccles. (*goes off and returns quickly*) I shan't come here again!

(*at door half-open*)

POLLY. Don't! Good riddance to bad rubbish.

SAM. (*rushing down stage to* POLLY) You can go to your *captain!*

POLLY. And you to your *putty.*

Throws his cap down and kicks it—then goes up stage and picks it up. POLLY *turns and rises, leaning against table, facing him, crosses to door, and locks it.* SAM, *hearing the click of the lock, turns quickly.*

ESTHER. And shall you always love me as you do now?

GEO. More.

POLLY. Now you *shan't* go. (*locking door, taking out key, which she pockets and placing her back against door*) Nyer! Now I'll just show you my power. Nyer!

SAM. *Miss Mary* Eccles, let me out!

(*advancing to door*)

POLLY. *Mr.* Samuel Gerridge, I shan't.

(SAM *turns away*)

ESTHER. Now you two. (*postman's knock*) The postman!

SAM. Now you must let me out. You must unlock the door.

POLLY. No, I needn't. (*opens window, looking out*) Here—postman! (*takes letter from postman, at window*) Thank you. (*business; flicks* SAM *in the face with letter*) For you, Esther!

ESTHER. (*rising*) For me?

POLLY. Yes.

Gives it to her, and closes window, and returns to door triumphantly. SAM *goes to window.*

ESTHER. (*going down* R.C.) From Manchester!

GEO. Manchester?

(*coming down* L., *back of* ESTHER)

ESTHER. (*reading*) I've got the engagement—four pounds a week.

GEO. (*placing his arm around her*) You shan't go. Esther—stay—be my wife!

ESTHER. But the world—your world?

GEO. Hang the world! You're my world. Stay with your husband, *Mrs. George D'Alroy.*

During this POLLY *has been dancing up and down in front of door.*

SAM. I *will* go out!

(*turning with sudden determination*)

POLLY. You can't, and you shan't!

SAM. I can—I will!

(*opens window, and jumps out*)

POLLY. (*frightened*) He's hurt himself. Sam—Sam, dear Sam!

Running to window. SAM *appears at window.* POLLY *slaps his face and shuts window down violently.*

POLLY. Nyer!

(*during this* GEORGE *has kissed* ESTHER)

GEO. *My wife!*

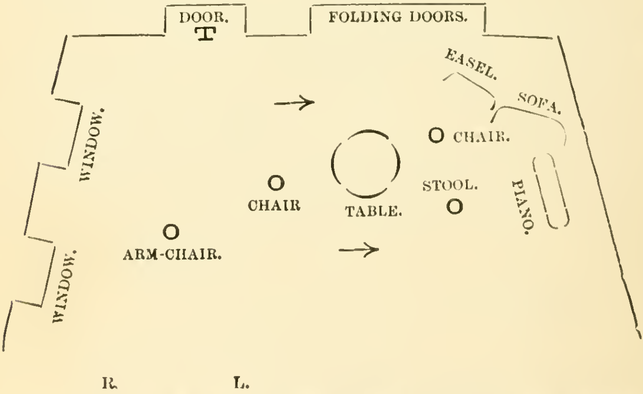
The handle of the door is heard to rattle, then the door is shaken violently. ESTHER *crosses to door; finding it locked turns to* POLLY, *sitting in window seat, who gives her the key.* ESTHER *then opens the door.* ECCLES *reels in, very drunk, and clings to the corner of bureau,* R., *for support.* GEORGE *stands* L.C., *pulling his moustache.* ESTHER, *a little way up,* R.C., *looking with shame first at her father, then at* GEORGE. POLLY *sitting in window recess,* C.

ACT DROP.

FOR CALL—GEORGE, *hat in hand, bidding* ESTHER *good bye,* R.H. ECCLES *sitting in chair, nodding before fire.* SAM *again looks in at window.* POLLY *pulls the blind down violently.*

ACT II.

SCENE.—D'ALROY'S *lodgings in Mayfair. A set chamber Folding-doors opening on to drawing-room,* L.H. *in flat. Door,* R.H. *in flat. Two windows, with muslin curtains,* R.H. *Loo-table,* L.C. *Sofa above piano. Two easy-chairs,* R. *and* L. *of table. Dessert—Claret in jug; two wine-glasses half full. Box of cigarettes, vase of flowers, embroidered slipper on canvas, and small basket of coloured wools, all on table. Footstool,* L. *of* L.H. *easy-chair. Ornamental gilt work-basket on stand in window,* 1 E.R. *Easy-chair,* R.H., 2 E.R. *Piano,* L.H. *Mahogany-stained easel with oil-painting of* D'ALROY *in full Dragoon regimentals. Davenport, with vase of flowers on it,* R.C.*; a chair on each side; a water-colour drawing over it, and on each side of room. Half moonlight through window. See Diagram.*



ESTHER *and* GEORGE *discovered.* ESTHER *at window,* R.*; when curtain has risen she comes down slowly to chair* R. *of table, and* GEORGE *sitting in easy-chair* L. *of table.* GEORGE *has his uniform trousers and spurs on.*

ESTHER. George, dear, you seem out of spirits.

GEO. (*smoking cigarette*) Not at all, dear, not at all. (*rallying*)

Esther. Then why don't you talk?

Geo. I've nothing to say.

Esther. That's no reason.

Geo. I can't talk about nothing.

Esther. Yes, you can; you often do. (*crossing to round back of table and caressing him*) You used to do before we were married.

Geo. No, I didn't. I talked about you, and my love for you. D'ye call that nothing?

Esther. (*sitting on stool,* L. *of* George) How long have we been married, dear? Let me see; six months yesterday. (*dreamily*) It hardly seems a week; it almost seems a dream.

Geo. (*putting his arm around her*) Awfully jolly dream. Don't let us wake up. (*aside and recovering himself*) How ever shall I tell her?

Esther. And when I married you I was twenty-two; wasn't I?

Geo. Yes, dear; but then, you know, you must have been some age or other.

Esther. No; but to think that I lived two-and-twenty years without knowing you?

Geo. What of it, dear?

Esther. It seems such a dreadful waste of time.

Geo. So it was—awful!

Esther. Do you remember our first meeting? Then I was in the ballet.

Geo. Yes; now you're in the heavies.

Esther. Then I was in the front rank—now I am of high rank—the Honourable Mrs. George D'Alroy. You promoted me to be your wife.

Geo. No, dear, you promoted me to be your husband.

Esther. And now I'm one of the aristocracy; ain't I?

Geo. Yes, dear; I suppose that we may consider ourselves——

Esther. Tell me, George; are you quite sure that you are proud of your poor little humble wife?

Geo. Proud of you! Proud as the winner of the Derby.

Esther. Wouldn't you have loved me better if I'd been a lady?

Geo. You *are* a lady—you're my wife.

Esther. What will your mamma say when she knows of our marriage? I quite tremble at the thought of meeting her.

Geo. So do I. Luckily, she's in Rome.

Esther. Do you know, George, I should like to be married all over again.

Geo. Not to anybody else, I hope.

Esther. My darling!

Geo. But why over again? Why?

Esther. Our courtship was so beautiful. It was like in a novel from the library, only better. You, a fine, rich, high-born gentleman, coming to our humble little house to court poor me. Do you remember the ballet you first saw me in? That was at Covent Garden. "Jeanne la Folle: or, the Return of the Soldier." (*goes to piano*) Don't you remember the dance? (*plays a quick movement*)

Geo. Esther, how came you to learn to play the piano? Did you teach yourself?

Esther. Yes. (*turning on music-stool*) So did Polly We can only just touch the notes to amuse ourselves.

Geo. How was it?

Esther. I've told you so often.

(*rises and sits on stool at* George's *feet*)

Geo. Tell me again. I'm like the children—I like to hear what I know already.

Esther. Well, then, mother died when I was quite young. I can only just remember her. Polly was an infant; so I had to be Polly's mother. Father—who is a very eccentric man (George *sighs deeply*—Esther *notices it and goes on rapidly—all to be simultaneous in action*) but a very good one when you know him—did not take much notice of us, and we got on as we could. We used to let the first floor, and a lodger took it—Herr Griffenhaagen. He was a ballet master at the Opera. He took a fancy to me, and asked me if I should like to learn to dance, and I told him father couldn't afford to pay for my tuition; and he said that (*imitation*) he did not vant bayment, but dat he would teach me for noding, for he had taken a fancy to me, because I was like a leetle lady he had known long years ago in de far off land he came from. Then he got us an engagement at the theatre. That was how we first were in the ballet.

Geo. (*slapping his leg*) That fellow was a great brick; I should like to ask him to dinner. What became of him?

Esther. I don't know. He left England. (George *fidgets and looks at watch*) You are very restless, George. What's the matter?

GEO. Nothing.

ESTHER. Are you going out?

GEO. Yes. (*looking at his boots and spurs*) That's the reason I dined in——

ESTHER. To the barracks?

GEO. Yes.

ESTHER. On duty?

GEO. (*hesitatingly*) On duty. (*rising*) And, of course, when a man is a soldier, he must go on duty when he's ordered, and where he's ordered, and—and—(*aside*)—why did I ever enter the service! (*crosses to* R.H.)

ESTHER. (*rises—crosses to* GEORGE—*and twining her arm round him*) George, if you must go out to your club, go; don't mind leaving me. Somehow or other, George, these last few days everything seems to have changed with me—I don't know why. Sometimes my eyes fill with tears, for no reason, and sometimes I feel so happy, for no reason. I don't mind being left by myself as I used to do. When you are a few minutes behind time I don't run to the window and watch for you, and turn irritable. Not that I love you less—no, for I love you more; but often when you are away I don't feel that I am by myself. (*dropping her head on his breast*) I never feel alone.

(*goes to piano and turns over music*)

GEO. (*watching* ESTHER) What angels women are! At least, this one is. I forget all about the others. (*carriage-wheels heard off*, R.H.) If I'd known I could have been so happy, I'd have sold out when I married.

(*knock at street door*)

ESTHER. (*standing at table*) That for us, dear?

GEO. (*at first window*) Hawtree in a hansom. He's come for—(*aside*) me. I *must* tell her sooner or later. (*at door*) Come in, Hawtree.

Enter HAWTREE, *in regimentals*, R.D.

HAW. How do? Hope you're well, Mrs. D'Alroy? (*coming down*, R.) George, are you coming to——

GEO. (*coming down* L. *of* HAWTREE) No, I've dined (*gives a significant look*)——we dined early.

(ESTHER *plays scraps of music at piano*)

HAW. (*sotto voce*) Haven't you told her?

GEO. No, I daren't.

HAW. But you must.

GEO. You know what an awful coward I am. You do it for me.

HAW. Not for worlds. I've just had my own adieux to make.

GEO. Ah, yes—to Florence Carberry. How did she take it?

HAW. Oh, (*slight pause*) very well.

GEO. Did she cry? (*earnestly*)

HAW. No.

GEO. Nor exhibit any emotion whatever?

HAW. No, not particularly.

GEO. Didn't you kiss her? (*surprisedly*)

HAW. No; Lady Clardonax was in the room.

GEO. Didn't she squeeze your hand? (*wonderingly*)

HAW. No

GEO. Didn't she say anything? (*impressively*)

HAW. No, except that she hoped to see me back again soon, and that India was a bad climate.

GEO. Umph! It seems to have been a tragic parting (*serio-comically*)—almost as tragic as parting—your back hair.

HAW. Lady Florence is not the sort of person to make a scene.

GEO. To be sure, she's not your wife. I wish Esther would be as cool and comfortable. (*after a pause*) No, I don't—no, I don't. (*a rap at door*)

Enter DIXON, R.H.D.

GEO. (*goes up to* DIXON) Oh, Dixon, lay out my——

DIX. I have laid them out, sir; everything is ready.

GEO. (*coming down to* HAWTREE—*after a pause, irresolutely*) I must tell her—mustn't I?

HAW. Better send for her sister. Let Dixon go for her in a cab.

GEO. Just so I'll send him at once. Dixon!

(*goes up and talks to* DIXON

ESTHER. (*rising and going to back of chair* L. *of table*) Do you want to have a talk with my husband? Shall I go into the dining-room?

HAW. No, Mrs. D'Alroy.

(*going to* R. *of table and placing cap on it*)

GEO. No, dear. At once, Dixon. Tell the cabman to drive like—(*exit* DIXON, R.D.)—like a—cornet just joined.

ESTHER. (*to* HAWTREE) Are you going to take him anywhere?

HAW. (L. GEORGE *comes down* R. *of* HAWTREE *and touches him quickly on the shoulder before he can speak*) No. (*aside*) Yes—to India. (*crossing to* R. *to* GEORGE) Tell her now.

GEO. (C.) No, no. I'll wait till I put on my uniform. (*going up*, R.H.)

The R.H. *door opens, and* POLLY *peeps in.*

POLLY. How d'ye do, good people—quite well?

(POLLY *gets* C. *back of table—kisses* ESTHER)

GEO. Eh? Didn't you meet Dixon?

POLLY. Who?

GEO. Dixon—my man.

POLLY. No.

GEO. Confound it! he'll have his ride for nothing. How d'ye do, Polly? (*shakes hands*)

POLLY. How d'ye do, George?

ESTHER *takes* POLLY'S *things and places them up,* L.H. POLLY *places parasol on table,* C. ESTHER *returns* L. *of* POLLY.

POLLY. (B.C.) Bless you, my turtles. (*blessing them, ballet fashion*) George, kiss your mother. (B.C.; *he kisses her*) That's what I call an honourable brother-in-law's kiss. I'm not in the way, am I?

GEO. (*behind easy-chair* R. *of table*) Not at all. I'm very glad you've come.

ESTHER *shows* POLLY *the new music.* POLLY *sits at piano and plays comic tune.*

HAW. (*back to audience, and elbow on easy-chair*, R; *aside to* GEORGE) Under ordinary circumstances she's not a very eligible visitor.

GEO. Caste again. (*going up*, R.) I'll be back directly. (*Exit* GEORGE *door* R.H.)

HAW. (*looking at watch, and crossing,* L.) Mrs. D'Alroy, I——

ESTHER. (*who is standing over* POLLY *at piano*) Going?

POLLY. (*rising*) Do I drive you away, captain?

Taking her parasol from table. ESTHER *gets to back of chair* L. *of table.*

HAW. No.

POLLY. Yes, I do. I frighten you, I'm so ugly. I know I do. You frighten me.

HAW. How so?

POLLY. (L.) You're so handsome. (*coming down*, L.) Particularly in those clothes, for all the world like an inspector of police.

ESTHER. (L., *half aside*) Polly!

POLLY. (L.C.) I will! I like to take him down a bit.

HAW. (R.C., *aside*) This is rather a wild sort of thing in sisters-in-law.

POLLY. Any news, captain?

HAW. (*in a drawling tone*) No. Is there any news with you?

POLLY. Yaas: (*imitating him*) we've got a new piece coming out at our theatre.

HAW. (*interested*) What's it about?

POLLY. (*drawling*) I don't know. (*to* ESTHER) Had him there! (HAWTREE *drops his sword from his arm; POLLY turns round quickly, hearing the noise, and pretends to be frightened*) Going to kill anybody to-day, that you've got your sword on?

HAW. No.

POLLY. I thought not. (*sings*)

> "With a sabre on his brow,
> And a helmet by his side,
> The soldier sweethearts servant-maids,
> And eats cold meat besides."

(*laughs and walks about waving her parasol*)

Enter GEORGE, *door* R.F., *in uniform, carrying in his hand his sword, sword belt, and cap.* ESTHER *takes them from him, and places them on sofa,* L.H.; *then comes half down,* L.H. GEORGE *goes down,* R.C., *by* HAWTREE.

POLLY. (*clapping her hands*) Oh! here's a beautiful brother-in-law. Why didn't you come in on horseback, as they do at Astley's? gallop in and say (*imitating soldier on horseback and prancing up and down stage during the piece*), Soldiers of France! the eyes of Europe are a looking at you! The Empire has confidence in you, and France expects that every man this day will do his little utmost! The foe is before you—more's the pity—and you are before them—worse luck for you! Forward! Go and get killed; and to those who escape the Emperor

will give a little bit of ribbon! Nineteens, about! Forward! Gallop! Charge!

Galloping to R., *imitating bugle, and giving point with parasol. She nearly spears* HAWTREE'S *nose.* HAWTREE *claps his hand upon his sword-hilt. She throws herself into chair, laughing, and clapping* HAWTREE'S *cap (from table) upon her head. All laugh and applaud. Carriage-wheels heard without.*

POLLY. Oh, what a funny little cap, it's got no peak. (*a peal of knocks heard at street-door*) What's that?

GEO. (*who has hastened to window,* R.) A carriage! Good heavens—my mother!

HAW. (*at window,* 1 E.R.) The Marchioness!

ESTHER. (*crossing to* GEORGE, R.C.) Oh, George!

POLLY. (*crossing to window*) A Marchioness! A real, live Marchioness! Let me look! I never saw a real live Marchioness in all my life.

GEO. (*forcing her from window*) No, no, no. She doesn't know I'm married. I must break it to her by degrees. What shall I do?

By this time HAWTREE *is at door* R.H., ESTHER *at door* L.H.

ESTHER. Let me go into the bedroom until——

HAW. Too late! She's on the stairs.

ESTHER. Here then! (*at* C. *doors, opens them*)

POLLY. I want to see a real, live March——

GEORGE *lifts her in his arms and places her within folding-doors with* ESTHER—*then shutting doors quickly, turns and faces* HAWTREE, *who, gathering up his sword, faces* GEORGE. *They then exchange places much in the fashion of soldiers "mounting guard." As* GEORGE *opens door,* R.F., *and admits* MARCHIONESS, HAWTREE *drops down* L.H.

GEO. (*with great ceremony*) My dear mother, I saw you getting out of the carriage.

MAR. My dear boy (*kissing his forehead*), I'm so glad I got to London before you embarked. (GEORGE *nervous.* HAWTREE *coming down,* L.H.) Captain Hawtree, I think. How do you do?

HAW. (*coming forward a little*) Quite well, I thank your ladyship. I trust you are——

MAR. (*sitting in easy-chair*) Oh, quite, thanks. (*slight pause*) Do you still see the Countess and Lady Florence?

(*looking at him through her glasses*)

HAW. Yes.

MAR. Please remember me to them——(HAWTREE *takes cap from table, and places sword under his arm*) Are you going?

HAW. Ya-a-s. Compelled. (*bows, crossing round back of table. To* GEORGE, *who meets him*, C.) I'll be at the door for you at seven. We must be at barracks by the quarter. (GEORGE *crosses*, L. *back of table*) Poor devil! This comes of a man marrying beneath him!

Exit HAWTREE, *door* R.F. GEORGE *comes down* L. *of table*.

MAR. I'm not sorry that he's gone, for I wanted to talk to you alone. Strange that a woman of such good birth as the Countess should encourage the attentions of Captain Hawtree for her daughter Florence. (*during these lines* D'ALROY *conceals* POLLY'S *hat and umbrella under table*) Lady Clardonax was one of the old Carberrys of Hampshire—not the Norfolk Carberrys, but the direct line. And Mr. Hawtree's grandfather was in trade—something in the City—soap, I think—Stool, George! (*points to stool.* GEORGE *brings it to her. She motions that he is to sit at her feet;* GEORGE *does so with a sigh*) He's a very nice person, but *parvenu*, as one may see by his languor and his swagger. My boy (*kissing his forehead*), I am sure, will never make a *mésalliance*. He is a D'Alroy, and by his mother's side *Planta-genista*. The source of our life stream is royal.

GEO. How is the Marquis?

MAR. Paralysed. I left him at Spa with three physicians. He always is paralysed at this time of the year; it is in the family. The paralysis is not personal, but hereditary. I came over to see my steward; got to town last night.

GEO. How did you find me out here?

MAR. I sent the footman to the barracks, and he saw your man Dixon in the street, and Dixon gave him this address. It's so long since I've seen you. (*leans back in chair*) You're looking very well, and I dare say when mounted are quite a "beau cavalier." And so my boy (*playing with his hair*), you are going abroad for the first time on active service

Geo. (*aside*) Every word can be heard in the next room. If they've only gone upstairs.

Mar. And now, my dear boy, before you go I want to give you some advice; and you mustn't despise it because I'm an old woman. We old women know a great deal more than people give us credit for. You are a soldier—so was your father—so was his father—so was mine—so was our royal founder; we were born to lead! The common people expect it from us. It is our duty. Do you not remember in the Chronicles of Froissart? (*with great enjoyment*) I think I can quote it word for word; I've a wonderful memory for my age. (*with closed eyes*) It was in the fifty-ninth chapter—"How Godefroy D'Alroy helde the towne of St. Amande duryng the siege before Tournay. It said the towne was not closed but with pales, and captayne there was Sir Amory of Pauy—the Seneschall of Carcassoune—who had said it was not able to hold agaynste an hooste, when one Godefroy D'Alroy sayd that rather than he woulde depart, he woulde keep it to the best of his power. Whereat the souldiers cheered and sayd, 'Lead us on, Sir Godefroy.' And then began a fierce assault; and they within were chased, and sought for shelter from street to street. But Godefroy stood at the gate so valyantly that the souldiers helde the towne until the commyng of the Earl of Haynault with twelve thousande men."

Geo. (*aside*) I wish she'd go. If she once gets on to Froissart, she'll never know when to stop.

Mar. When my boy fights—and you will fight—he is sure to distinguish himself. It is his nature to—(*toys with his hair*)—he cannot forget his birth. And when you meet these Asiatic ruffians, who have dared to revolt, and to outrage humanity, you will strike as your ancestor Sir Galtier of Chevrault struck at Poictiers. (*changing tone of voice as if remembering*) Froissart mentions it thus—"Sir Galtier, with his four squires, was in the front of that battell, and there did marvels in arms. And Sir Galtier rode up to the Prince, and sayd to him—'Sir, take your horse and ryde forth, this journey is yours. God is this day in your hands. Gette us to the French Kynge's batayle. I think verily by his valyantesse he woll not fly. Advance banner in the name of God and of Saynt George!' And Sir Galtier galloped forward to see his Kynge's victory, and meet his own death."

Geo. (*aside*) If Esther hears all this!

Mar. There is another subject about which I should

have spoken to you before this; but an absurd prudery forbade me. I may never see you more. I am old—and you—are going into battle—(*kissing his forehead with emotion*)—and this may be our last meeting. (*a noise heard within folding-doors*) What's that?

GEO. Nothing—my man Dixon in there.

MAR. We may not meet again on this earth. I do not fear your conduct, my George, with men; but I know the temptations that beset a youth who is well born. But a true soldier, a true gentleman, should not only be without fear, but without reproach. It is easier to fight a furious man than to forego the conquest of a love-sick girl. A thousand Sepoys slain in battle cannot redeem the honour of a man who has betrayed the confidence of a trusting woman. Think, George, what dishonour—what stain upon your manhood—to hurl a girl to shame and degradation! And what excuse for it? That she is plebeian? A man of real honour will spare the woman who has confessed her love for him, as he would give quarter to an enemy he had disarmed. (*taking his hands*) Let my boy avoid the snares so artfully spread; and when he asks his mother to welcome the woman he has chosen for his wife, let me take her to my arms and plant a motherly kiss upon the white brow of a lady. (*noise of a fall heard within folding-doors; rising*) What's that?

GEO Nothing. (*rising*)

MAR. I heard a cry.

Folding-doors open, discovering ESTHER *with* POLLY, *staggering in, fainting.*

POLLY. George! George!

GEORGE *goes up and* ESTHER *falls in his arms.* POLLY *stands* R.C. GEORGE *places* ESTHER *on sofa.* GEORGE *on her* R., POLLY *on her* L.

MAR. (*coming down*, R.) Who are these *women?*

POLLY. Women!

MAR. George D'Alroy, these persons should have been sent away. How could you dare to risk your mother meeting women of their stamp?

POLLY. (*violently*) What does she mean? How dare she call me a woman? What's she, I'd like to know?

GEO. (R. *of sofa*) Silence, Polly! You mustn't insult my mother.

MAR. The insult is from you. I leave you, and I hope

that time may induce me to forget this scene of degradation. (*turning to go*)

GEO. Stay, mother. (MARCHIONESS *turns slightly away*) Before you go (GEORGE *has raised* ESTHER *from sofa in both arms*) let me present to you Mrs. George D'Alroy. *My wife!*

MAR. Married!

GEO. Married.

The MARCHIONESS *sinks into easy-chair*, R.H. GEORGE *replaces* ESTHER *on sofa up* L., *but still retains her hand. Three hesitating taps at door heard.* GEORGE *crosses to door*, R.H., *opens it, discovers* ECCLES, *who enters.* GEORGE *drops down back of* MARCHIONESS' *chair.*

ECCLES. (C.) They told us to come up. When your man came Polly was out; so I thought I should do instead. (*calling at door*) Come up, Sam.

Enter SAM *in his Sunday clothes, with short cane and smoking a cheroot. He nods and grins*—POLLY *points to* MARCHIONESS—SAM *takes cheroot from his mouth and quickly removes his hat.*

ECCLES. Sam had just called; so we three—Sam and I, and your man, all came in the 'ansom cab together. Didn't we, Sam?

ECCLES *and* SAM *go over to the girls*, L.H., *and* ECCLES *drops down to front of table—smilingly.*

MAR. (*with glasses up, to* GEORGE) Who is this?

GEO. (*coming* L. *of* MARCHIONESS) My wife's father.

MAR. What is he?

GEO. A—nothing.

ECCLES. I am one of nature's noblemen. Happy to see you, my lady—(*turning to her*)—now, my daughters have told me who you are—(GEORGE *turns his back in an agony as* ECCLES *crosses to* MARCHIONESS)—we old folks, fathers and mothers of the young couples, ought to make friends.

(*holding out his dirty hand*)

MAR. (*shrinking back*) Go away! (ECCLES *goes back to table again, disgusted*, L.H.) What's his name?

GEO. Eccles.

MAR. Eccles! Eccles! There never was an Eccles. He don't exist.

ECCLES. (L.) Don't he, though! What d'ye call this?

Goes up again L., *to back of table as* SAM *drops down. He is just going to take a decanter when* SAM *stops him.*

MAR. No Eccles was ever born!

GEO. He takes the liberty of breathing notwithstanding. (*aside*) And I wish he wouldn't!

MAR. And who is the little man? Is he also Eccles?

SAM *looks round.* POLLY *gets close up to him, and looks with defiant glance at the* MARCHIONESS.

GEO. No.

MAR. Thank goodness! What then?

GEO. His name is Gerridge.

MAR. *Gerridge!* It breaks one's teeth. Why is he here?

GEO. He is making love to Polly, my wife's sister.

MAR. And what is he?

GEO. A gasman.

MAR. He looks it. (GEORGE *goes up to* ESTHER, L.) And what is she—the—the—the sister?

ECCLES, *who has been casting longing eyes at the decanter on table, edges towards it, and when he thinks no one is noticing, fills wine-glass.*

POLLY. (*asserting herself indignantly*) I'm in the ballet at the Theatre Royal, Lambeth. So was Esther. We're not ashamed of what we are! We have no cause to be.

SAM. (*back,* L.C.) That's right, Polly! pitch into them swells!—who are they?

ECCLES *by this time has seized wine-glass, and, turning his back, is about to drink, when* HAWTREE *enters door,* R. *flat.* ECCLES *hides glass under his coat, and pretends to be looking up at picture.*

HAW. (*entering*) George! (*stops suddenly, looking round*) So, all's known!

MAR. (*rising*) Captain Hawtree, see me to my carriage; I am broken-hearted!

(*takes* HAWTREE'S *arm, and is going up*)

ECCLES. (*who has tasted the claret, spits it out with a grimace, exclaiming*)—Rot!

POLLY *goes to piano, sits on stool*—SAM *back to audience, leaning on piano*—ECCLES *exits through folding-doors.*

GEO. (L.; *to* MARCHIONESS) Don't go in anger. You may not see me again.

ESTHER *rises in nervous excitement, clutching* GEORGE'S *hand.* MARCHIONESS *stops,* R. ESTHER *brings* GEORGE *down,* C.

ESTHER. (L.C.; *with arm round his neck*) Oh, George! must you go? (*they come* L. *to front of table*)

GEO. (R.C.) Yes.

ESTHER. I can't leave you! I'll go with you!

GEO. Impossible! The country is too unsettled.

ESTHER. May I come after you?

GEO. Yes.

ESTHER. (*with her head on his shoulder*) I may.

MAR. (*coming down,* R. HAWTREE *at door* R.H.) It is his duty to go. His honour calls him. The honour of his family—*our* honour!

ESTHER. But I love him so! Pray don't be angry with me!

HAW. (*looking at watch, and coming down,* C.) George!

GEO. I must go, love!

(HAWTREE *goes up to door again*)

MAR. (*advancing*) Let me arm you, George—let your mother, as in the days of old. There is blood—and blood, my son. See, your wife cries when she should be proud of you!

GEO. My Esther is all that is good and noble. No lady born to a coronet could be gentler or more true. Esther, my wife, fetch me my sword, and buckle my belt around me.

ESTHER. (*clinging to him*) No, no; I can't!

GEO. Try. (*whispers to* ESTHER) To please my mother. (*to* MARCHIONESS) You shall see. (ESTHER *totters up stage,* POLLY *assisting her* L., *and brings down his sword. As* ESTHER *is trying to buckle his belt, he whispers*) I've left money for you, my darling. My lawyer will call on you to-morrow. Forgive me! I tried hard to tell you we were

ordered for India; but when the time came, my heart failed me, and I——

ESTHER, *before she can succeed in fastening his sword-belt, reels, and falls fainting in his arms.* POLLY *hurries to her.* SAM. *standing at piano, looking frightened;* HAWTREE *with hand upon handle of door,* R.F.; MARCHIONESS *looking on.* R. *of* GEORGE.

ACT DROP.

FOR CALL.—GEORGE *and* HAWTREE *gone.* ESTHER *in chair,* C., *fainting;* POLLY *and* SAM *each side of her,* POLLY *holding her hands and* SAM *fanning her with his red handkerchief. The folding-doors,* L.C., *thrown open, and* ECCLES *standing at back of table offering glass of claret.*

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The room in Stangate (as in Act I.). Same furniture as in Act I. with exception of piano, with roll of music tied up on it in place of bureau,* R.H. *Map of India over mantel-piece. Sword with crape knot, spurs, and cap, craped, hanging over chimney-piece. Portrait of* D'ALROY *(large) on mantelpiece, Berceaunette, and child, with coral, in it.* POLLY'S *bonnet and shawl hanging on peg,* R.F. *Small tin saucepan in fender, fire alight, and kettle on it. Two candles (tallow) in sticks, one of which is broken about three inches from the top and hangs over. Slate and pencil on table. Jug on table, bandbox and ballet skirt on table.*

At rise of curtain POLLY *discovered at table, back of stage. comes down and places the skirt in bandbox. She is dressed in black.*

POLLY. (*placing skirt in box, and leaning her chin upon her hand*) There—there's the dress for poor Esther in case she gets the engagement, which I don't suppose she will. It's too good luck, and good luck never comes to her, poor thing. (*goes up to back of cradle*) Baby's asleep still. How good he looks—as good as if he were dead, like his poor father; and alive too, at the same time like his dear self. Ah! dear me; it's a strange world. (*sits in chair* R. *of table, feeling in pocket for money*) Four and elevenpence. That must do for to-day and to-morrow. Esther is going to bring in the rusks for Georgey (*takes up slate*) Three, five—eight, and four—twelve, one shilling—father can only have twopence. (*this all to be said in one breath*) he must make do with that till Saturday, when I get my salary. If Esther gets the engagement, I shan't have many more salaries to take; I shall leave the stage and retire into private life. I wonder if I shall like private life, and if private life will like me. It will seem so strange being no longer Miss Mary Eccles — but Mrs. Samuel Gerridge. (*writes it on slate*) "Mrs. Samuel Gerridge." (*laughs bashfully*) La! to think of my being Mrs. Anybody. How annoyed Susan Smith will be! (*writing on slate*) "Mrs. Samuel Gerridge presents her compliments to

Miss Susan Smith, and Mrs. Samuel Gerridge requests the favour of Miss Susan Smith's company to tea, on Tuesday evening next, at Mrs. Samuel Gerridge's house." (*pause*) Poor Susan! (*beginning again*) "P.S.—"Mrs. Samuel Gerridge——" (*knock heard at room door*; POLLY *starts*)

SAM. (*without*) Polly, open the door.

POLLY. Sam! Come in.

SAM. (*without*) I can't.

POLLY. Why not?

SAM. I've got somethin' on my ead.

> POLLY *rises and opens door*, R.H. SAM *enters, carrying two rolls of wall-paper, one in each hand, and a small table on his head, which he deposits down stage* R.H., *then puts rolls of paper on piano, as also his cap.* SAM *has a rule-pocket in corduroys.*

POLLY (*shuts door*) What's that? (*coming* R.C.)

SAM. (*pointing to table with pride*) Furniture. How are you, my Polly? (*kissing her*) You look handsomer than ever this morning. (*dances and sings*) "Tid-dle-di-tum-ti-di-do."

POLLY. (L.) What's the matter, Sam?—are you mad?

SAM. (C.) No, 'appy—much the same thing.

POLLY. Where have you been these two days?

SAM (*all excitement*) That's just what I'm goin' to tell yer. Polly, my pet, my brightest batswing and most brilliant burner, what do yer think?

POLLY. Oh, do go on, Sam, or I'll slap your face.

SAM. Well, then, you've 'eard me speak of old Binks, the plumber, glazier, and gasfitter, who died six months ago?

POLLY. Yes.

SAM. (*sternly and deliberately*) I've bought 'is business.

POLLY. No!

SAM. (*excitedly*) Yes, of 'is widow, old Mrs. Binks—so much down, and so much more at the end of the year. (*dances and sings up* R.H.)

> "Ri-ti-toodle
> Roodle-oodle
> Ri-ti-tooral-lay."

POLLY. La, Sam!

SAM. (*pacing stage up and down*) Yes; I've bought the goodwill, fixtures, fittin's, stock, rolls of gas-pipe, and sheets of lead. (*jumps on table,* R.H. *quickly facing*

POLLY) Yes, Polly, I'm a tradesman with a shop—a master tradesman. (*coming to* POLLY *seriously*) All I want to complete the premises is a missus.

(*tries to kiss her. She pushes him away*)

POLLY. Sam, don't be foolish!

SAM. (*arm round her waist*) Come and be Mrs. Sam Gerridge, Polly, my patent-safety-day-and-night-light. You'll furnish me completely.

POLLY *goes up* L.H. SAM *watching her admiringly, he then sees slate, snatches it up and looks at it. She snatches it from him with a shriek, and rubs out writing, looking daggers at him, both* L.C., SAM *laughing.*

SAM. Only to think now.

(*putting arm round her waist,* POLLY *pouting*)

POLLY. Don't be a goose.

SAM. (*going towards table,* R.H.) I spent the whole of yesterday lookin' up furniture. Now I bought that a bargain, and I brought it 'ere to show you for your approval. I've bought lots of other things, and I'll bring 'em all here to show yer for your approval.

POLLY. I couldn't think what had become of you.

(*seated* R. *of table*)

SAM. Couldn't yer? Oh, I say, I want yer to choose the new paper for the little back parlour just behind the shop, you know. Now what d'yer think o' this?

(*fetching a pattern from piano and unrolling it,* C.)

POLLY. (*standing,* L.C.) No. I don't like that. (SAM *fetches the other, a flaming pattern*) Ah! that's neat.

SAM. Yes, that's neat and quiet. I'll new-paper it, and new-furnish it, and it shall all be bran-new.

(*puts paper on top of piano*)

POLLY. But won't it cost a lot of money?

SAM. (*bravely*) I can work for it. With customers in the shop, and you in the back-parlour, I can work like fifty men. (*sits on table,* R.H., *beckons* POLLY *to him, she comes* L. *of table* R.H., SAM *puts his arm round* POLLY, *sentimentally*) Only fancy, at night, when the shop's closed, and the shutters are up, counting out the till together! (*changing his manner*) Besides, that isn't all I've been doin'. I've been writin', and what I've written I've got printed.

POLLY. No!

SAM. True.

POLLY. You've been writing—about me? (*delighted*)

SAM. No—about the shop. (POLLY *disgusted*) Here it is. (*takes roll of circulars from pocket of his canvas slop*) Yer mustn't laugh—you know—it's my first attempt. I wrote it the night before last; and when I thought of you the words seemed to flow like—red-hot solder. (*reads*) Hem! "Samuel Gerridge takes this opportunity of informin' the nobility, gentry, and inhabitants of the Borough-road——"

POLLY. The Borough-road?

SAM. Well, there ain't many of the nobility andgentry as lives in the Borough-road, but it pleases the inhabitants to make 'em believe yer think so (*resuming*)—"of informin' the nobility, gentry, and inhabitants of the Borough-road, and its vicinity," and "its vicinity." (*looking at her*) Now I think that's rather good, eh?

POLLY. Yes. (*doubtfully*) I've heard worse.

SAM. I first thought of saying neighbour'ood; but then vicinity sounds so much more genteel (*resuming*)—"*and* its vicinity, that 'e has entered upon the business of the late Mr. Binks, 'is relict, the present Mrs. B., 'avin' disposed to 'im of the same"—now listen, Polly, because it get's interestin'—"S. G.——"

POLLY. S. G. Who's he?

SAM. (*looking at* POLLY *with surprise*) Why me. S. G.—Samuel Gerridge—me, us. We're S. G. Now don't interrupt me, or you'll cool my metal, and then I can't work. "S. G. 'opes that, by a constant attention to business, and"—mark this—"by supplyin' the best articles at the most reasonable prices, to merit a continuance of those favours which it will ever be 'is constant study to deserve." There! (*turning on table to* R., *triumphantly*) Stop a bit—there's a little bit more yet. "Bell-'angin', gas-fittin,' plumbin', and glazin', as usual." There!—it's all my own.

Puts circular on mantel-piece, and crossing R.H., *contemplates it.*

POLLY. Beautiful Sam. It looks very attractive from here, don't it?

SAM. (*postman's knock*) There's the postman. I'll go. I shall send some of these out by post.

(*goes off* R.D. *and returns with letter*)

POLLY. (C., *taking it*) Oh, for Esther. I know who it's

from. (*places letter on mantel-piece. At chair* L. *of table,* L. SAM *sits corner of table* R.H., *reading circular. Seriously*) Sam, who do you think was here last night?

SAM. (R.) Who?

POLLY. Captain Hawtree.

SAM. (*deprecatingly*) Oh, 'im!—come back from India, I suppose.

POLLY. Yes; luckily, Esther was out.

SAM. I never liked that long swell. He was a 'uppish, conceited——

POLLY. (*sitting,* L., *at end of table* L.) Oh, he's better than he used to be—he's a major now. He's only been in England a fortnight.

SAM. (L. 2) Did he tell yer anything about poor De Alroy?

POLLY. (*leaning against table end*) Yes; he said he was riding out not far from the cantonment, and was surrounded by a troop of Sepoy cavalry, which took him prisoner, and galloped off with him.

SAM. But about 'is death?

POLLY. Oh! (*hiding her face*)—that he said was believed to be too terrible to mention.

SAM. (*crossing to* POLLY, R. *of table* L.) Did 'e tell yer anything else?

POLLY. No; he asked a lot of questions, and I told him everything. How poor Esther had taken her widowhood and what a dear, good baby the baby was, and what a comfort to us all, and how Esther had come back to live with us again.

SAM. (*sharply*) And the reason for it?

POLLY. (*looking down*) Yes.

SAM. How your father got all the money that 'e'd left for Esther.

POLLY. (*sharply*) Don't say any more about that, Sam.

SAM. Oh! I only think Captain 'awtree ought to know where the money *did* go to, and you shouldn't try and screen your father, and let 'im suppose that you and Esther spent it all.

POLLY. I told him—I told him—I told him.

(*angrily*)

SAM. Did you tell 'im that your father was always at 'armonic meetin's at taverns, and 'ad arf cracked 'isself with drink, and was always singin' the songs and makin' the speeches 'e 'eard there, and was always goin' on about

'is wrongs as one of the workin' classes? 'E's a pretty one for one of the workin' classes, 'e is! 'Asn't done a stroke o' work these twenty year. Now, I *am* one of the workin' classes, but I *don't* 'owl about it. I work, I don't spout.

POLLY. Hold your tongue, Sam. I won't have you say any more against poor father. He has his faults, but he's a very clever man. (*sighing*)

SAM. Ah! What else did Captain Hawtree say?

POLLY. He advised us to apply to Mr. D'Alroy's mother.

SAM. What! the Marquissy? And what did you say to that?

POLLY. I said that Esther wouldn't hear of it. And so the Major said that he'd write to Esther, and I suppose this is the letter.

SAM. Now, Polly, come along and choose the paper for the little back parlour.

Going towards table, R.H., *and takes it up to wall behind door,* R.H.

POLLY. (*rising*) Can't! Who's to mind baby?

SAM. The *baby?* Oh, I forgot all about 'im. (*goes to cradle*) I see yer! (*goes to window casually*) There's your father comin' down the street. Won't 'e mind 'im?

POLLY. (*going up,* C.) I dare say he will. If I promise him an extra sixpence on Saturday. (SAM *opens window*) Hi! Father! (POLLY *goes to cradle*)

SAM. (*aside*) 'E looks down in the mouth, 'e does. I suppose 'e's 'ad no drink this mornin'. (*goes* to POLLY)

Enter ECCLES *in shabby black. Pauses on entering, looks at* SAM, *turns away in disgust, takes off hat, places it on piano, and shambles across to* L. *Taking chair* L. *of table* L., *places it and sits before fire.*

POLLY. (*goes to* ECCLES, *down* L. *of table* L.) Come in to stop a bit, father?

ECCLES. No; not for long. (SAM *comes down* C.) Good morning, Samuel. Going back to work? that's right, my boy—stick to it. (*pokes fire*) Stick to it—nothing like it.

SAM. (*down* R.C., *aside*) Now, isn't that too bad! No, Mr. Eccles. I've knocked off for the day.

ECCLES. (*waving poker*) That's bad! That's very bad! Nothing like work—for the young. I don't work so much

as I used to, myself, but I like to (POLLY *sitting on corner of table up* L.) see the young 'uns at it. It does me good, and it does them good too. What does the poet say?

(*rising, impressively, and leaning on table*)

"A carpenter said tho' that was well spoke,
It was better by far to defend it with hoak.
A currier, wiser than both put together,
Said say what you will, there is nothing like *labour*.
For a' that, an' a' that,
Your ribbon, gown, an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The working man's the gold for a' that."

(*sits again, triumphantly wagging his head*)

SAM. (*aside*) This is one of the public-house loafers, that wants all the wages and none of the work, an idle old——

Goes in disgust to piano, puts on cap, and takes rolls of paper under his arm.

POLLY. (*to* ECCLES, L.H.) Esther will be in by-and-bye. (*persuasive*) Do, father!

ECCLES. No, no. I tell you I won't!

POLLY. (*whispering, arm round his neck*) And I'll give you sixpence extra on Saturday.

ECCLES' *face relaxes into a broad grin.* POLLY *gets hat and cloak, peg up,* R.H.

ECCLES. Ah! you sly little puss, you know how to get over your poor old father.

SAM. (*aside*) Yes, with sixpence.

POLLY. (*putting on bonnet and cloak at door*) Give the cradle a rock if baby cries.

SAM. (*crossing to* ECCLES) If you should 'appen to want employment or amusement, Mr. Eccles, just cast your eye over this. (*puts circular on table* L., *then joins* POLLY *at door*) Stop a bit, I've forgot to give the baby one.

Throws circular into cradle. Exeunt, POLLY *first.* ECCLES *takes out pipe from pocket, looks into it, then blows through it making a squeaking noise and finishes by tenderly placing it on the table. He then hunts all his pockets for tobacco, finally finding a little paper packet containing a screw of tobacco in*

his R.H. *waistcoat pocket, which he also places on table after turning up the corner of the tablecloth for the purpose of emptying the contents of his* R.H. *pocket of the few remnants of past screws of tobacco on to the bare table and mixing a little out the packet with it and filling pipe. He then brushes all that remains on the table into the paper packet, pinches it up, and carefully replaces it in* R.H. *waistcoat pocket. Having put the pipe into his mouth, he looks about for a light, across his shoulder and under table, though never rising from the chair; seeing nothing his face assumes an expression of comic anguish. Turning to table he angrily replaces tablecloth and then notices* SAM'S *circular. His face relaxes into a smile, and picking it up tears the circular in half, makes a spill of it, and lighting it at fire, stands with his back to fireplace and smokes vigorously.*

ECCLES. Poor Esther! Nice market she's brought her pigs to—ugh! Mind the baby indeed! What good is he to me? That fool of a girl to throw away all her chances!—a *honourable-hess*—and her father not to have on him the price of a pint of early beer or a quartern of cool, refreshing gin! Stopping in here to rock a young honourable! Cuss him! (*business, puffs smoke in baby's face,* L.H. *of cradle, rocking it*) Are we slaves, we working men? (*sings savagely*)

"Britons never, never, never shall be——"

(*nodding his head sagaciously, sits* R. *of table* L.) I won't stand this, I've writ to the old cat—I mean to the Marquissy—to tell her that her daughter-in-law and her grandson is almost starving. That fool Esther's too proud to write to her for money. I hate pride—it's *beastly!* (*rising*) There's no beastly pride about me. (*goes up,* L. *of table, smacking his lips*) I'm as dry as a lime-kill. (*takes up jug*) Milk!—(*with disgust*)—for this young aristocratic pauper. Everybody in the house is sacrificed for him! (*at foot of cradle,* R.C., *with arms on chair back*) And to think that a *working man*, and a member of the Committee of the Banded Brothers for the Regeneration of Human Kind, by means of equal diffusion of intelligence and equal division of property, should be thusty, while this cub (*draws aside curtain, and looks at child. After a pause*) That there coral he's got round his neck is *gold*, real *gold!* (*with hand on knob at end of*

cradle, R.C.) Oh, Society! Oh, Governments! Oh, Class Legislation!—*is this right?* Shall this mindless wretch enjoy himself, while sleeping, with a jewelled gawd, and his poor old grandfather want the price of half a pint? *No!* it shall not be! Rather than see it, I will myself resent this outrage on the rights of man! and in this holy crusade of class against class, of the weak and lowly against the *powerful and strong*—(*pointing to child*)—I will strike one blow for freedom! (*goes to back of cradle*) He's asleep. It will fetch ten bob round the corner; and if the Marquissy gives us anythink it can be got out with some o' that. (*steals coral*) Lie still, my darling!—it's grandfather's a-watching over you—

"Who ran to catch me when I fell,
And kicked the place to make it well?
My grandfather!"

(*rocking cradle with one hand; leaves it quickly, and as he takes hat off piano* ESTHER *enters. She is dressed as a widow, her face pale, and her manner quick and imperious. She carries a parcel and paper bag of rusks in her hand; she puts parcel on table, goes to cradle, kneels down and kisses child*) My lovey had a nice walk? You should wrap yourself up well—you're so liable to catch cold!

ESTHER. My Georgy?—Where's his coral? (ECCLES, *going door* R.; *fumbles with the lock nervously, and is going out as* ESTHER *speaks*) Gone!—Father!—(*rising*—ECCLES *stops*)—The child's coral—where is it?

ECCLES. (*confused*) Where's what, ducky?

ESTHER. The coral! You've got it—I know it! Give it me!—(*quickly and imperiously*)—*Give it me!* (ECCLES *takes coral from his pocket and gives it back*) If you *dare* to touch *my* child—— (*goes to cradle*)

ECCLES. Esther! (*going quickly to piano and banging his hat on it*) Am I not your father?—

(ESTHER *gets round to front of cradle*)

ESTHER. And I am his mother!

ECCLES. (*coming to her*) Do you bandy words with me, you pauper! you pauper!! you pauper!!! to whom I have given shelter—shelter to you and your brat! I've a good mind——

(*raising his clenched fist*)

ESTHER. (*confronting him*) If you dare! I am no longer your little drudge—your frightened servant. When mother died—(ECCLES *changes countenance and cowers beneath her*

glance)—and I was so high, I tended you, and worked for you—and you beat me. That time is past. I am a woman—I am a wife—a widow—a *mother!* Do you think I will let you outrage *him?* (*pointing to cradle*) *Touch me if you dare!* (*advancing a step*)

ECCLES. (*bursting into tears and coming down* R.C.) And this is my own child, which I nussed when a babby, and sung "Cootsicum Coo" to afore she could speak. (*gets hat from piano, and returns a step or two*) Hon. Mrs. De Alroy (ESTHER *drops down behind chair* R. *of table* L.), I forgive you for all that you have said. I forgive you for all that you have done. In everything that I have done I have acted with the best intentions. May the babe in that cradle never treat you as you have this day *tret* a grey 'aired father. May he never cease to love and *h*onour you, as you have ceased to love and *h*onour me, after all that I have done for you, and the position to which I 'ave raised you by my own *industry*. (*goes to door* R.) May he never behave to you like the bad daughters of King Lear; and may you never live to feel how much more sharper than a serpent's (*slight pause as if remembering quotation*) scale it is to have a thankless child! (*Exit*, R.D.)

ESTHER. (*kneeling back of cradle*) My darling! (*arranging bed and placing coral to the baby's lips, and then to her own*) Mamma's come back to her own. Did she stay away from him so long? (*rises, and looks at the sabre, &c.*) My George! to think that you can never look upon his face or hear his voice. My brave, gallant, handsome husband! My lion and my love! (*comes down*, C., *pacing the stage*) Oh! to be a soldier, and to fight the wretches who destroyed him—who took my darling from me! (*action of cutting with sabre*) To gallop miles upon their upturned faces. (*crossing*, L., *with action—breaks down sobbing at mantelpiece—sees letter*) What's this?—Captain Hawtree's hand. (*sitting in chair, reads, at left hand of table*) "My dear Mrs. D'Alroy,—I returned to England less than a fortnight ago. I have some papers and effects of my poor friend's, which I am anxious to deliver to you, and I beg of you to name a day when I can call with them and see you; at the same time let me express my deepest sympathy with your affliction. Your husband's loss was mourned by every man in the regiment. (ESTHER *lays the letter on her heart, and then resumes reading*) I have heard with great pain of the pecuniary embarrassments into which accident and the imprudence of others have placed

you. I trust you will not consider me, one of poor George's oldest comrades and friends, either intrusive or impertinent in sending the enclosed (*she takes out a cheque*), and in hoping that, should any further difficulties arise, you will inform me of them, and remember that I am, dear Mrs. D'Alroy, now, and always, your faithful and sincere friend, Arthur Hawtree." (ESTHER *goes to cradle, and bends over it*) Oh, *his* boy, if you could read it!

(*sobs, with head on head of cradle*)

Enter POLLY, D.R.

POLLY. Father gone!

ESTHER. Polly, you look quite flurried. (*goes*)

(POLLY *laughs, and whispers to* ESTHER)

ESTHER. (*near head of table. Taking* POLLY *in her arms and kissing her*) So soon? Well—my darling, I hope you may be happy.

POLLY. Yes. Sam's going to speak to father about it this afternoon. (*crosses* L., *round table, and putting rusks in saucepan*) Did you see the agent, dear?

ESTHER. (*sits* R. *of table*) Yes; the manager didn't come—he broke his appointment again.

POLLY. (*sits* L. *of table*) Nasty, rude fellow!

ESTHER. The agent said it didn't matter, he thought I should get the engagement. He'll only give me thirty shillings a week, though.

POLLY. But you said that two pounds was the regular salary.

ESTHER. Yes, but they know I'm poor, and want the engagement, and so take advantage of me.

POLLY. Never mind, Esther. I put the dress in that bandbox. It looks almost as good as new.

ESTHER. I've had a letter from Captain Hawtree.

POLLY. I know, dear; he came here last night.

ESTHER. A dear, good letter—speaking of George, and enclosing me a cheque for thirty pounds.

POLLY. Oh, how kind! Don't you tell father.

(*noise of carriage-wheels without*)

ESTHER. I shan't.

ECCLES *enters, breathless.* ESTHER *and* POLLY *rise.*

ECCLES. It's the Marquissy in her coach. (ESTHER *puts on the lid of bandbox*) Now, girls, do be civil to her, and

she may do something for us. (*places hat on piano*) I see the coach as I was coming out of the "Rainbow."

Hastily pulls an old comb out of his pocket, and puts his hair in order.

ESTHER. The Marquise!

ESTHER *comes down to end of table* R., POLLY *holding her hand.*

ECCLES. (*at door*) This way, my lady—up them steps They're rather awkward for the like's o' you; but them as is poor and lowly must do as best they can with steps and circumstances.

(ESTHER *and* POLLY, L.H., *at end of table*)

Enter MARQUISE, D.R. *She surveys the place with aggressive astonishment.*

MAR. (*going down*, R.; *half aside*) What a hole! And to think that my grandson should breathe such an atmosphere, and be contaminated by such associations! (*to* ECCLES, *who is a little up*, R.C.) Which is the young woman who married my son?

ESTHER. (L.) I am Mrs. George D'Alroy, widow of George D'Alroy. Who are you?

MAR. I am his mother, the Marquise de Saint Maur.

ESTHER. (*with the grand air*) Be seated, I beg.

ECCLES *takes chair from* R.C., *which* ESTHER *immediately seizes as* SAM *enters with an easy-chair on his head, which he puts down*, L. H., *not seeing* MARQUISE, *who instantly sits down in it, concealing it completely.*

SAM. (*astonished*, L. *of* MARQUISE) It's the Marquissy! (*looking at her*) My eye! These aristocrats are fine women—plenty of 'em (*describing circle*) quality and quantity!

POLLY. (L. *of table end*) Go away, Sam; you'd better come back.

ECCLES *nudges him, and bustles him towards door. Exit* SAM. ECCLES *shuts door on him.*

ECCLES. (*coming down*, R. *of* MARQUISE, *rubbing his hands*) If we'd a know'd you ladyship had bin a-coming we'd a had the place cleaned up a bit.

With hands on chair-back, R. *corner, down. He gets round to* R. *behind* MARQUISE, *who turns the chair slightly from him.*

POLLY. Hold your tongue, father! (ECCLES *crushed*)

MAR. (*to* ESTHER) You remember me, do you not?

ESTHER. Perfectly, though I only saw you once. (*seating herself en grande dame*, L.C.) May I ask what has procured me the honour of this visit?

MAR. I was informed that you were in want, and I came to offer you assistance.

ESTHER. I thank you for your offer, and the delicate consideration for my feelings with which it is made. I need no assistance. (ECCLES *groans and leans on piano*)

MAR. A letter I received last night informed me that you did.

ESTHER. May I ask if that letter came from Captain Hawtree?

MAR. No—from this person—your father, I think.

ESTHER. (*to* ECCLES) How dare you interfere in my affairs?

ECCLES. (R.) My lovey, I did it with the best intentions

MAR. Then you will not accept assistance from me?

ESTHER. No.

POLLY. (*aside to* ESTHER, *holding her hand*) Bless you, my darling! (POLLY *is standing beside her*)

MAR. But you have a child—a son—my grandson. (*with emotion*)

ESTHER. Master D'Alroy wants for nothing.

POLLY. (*aside*) And never shall.

(ECCLES *groans and turns on to piano*)

MAR. I came here to propose that my grandson should go back with me. (POLLY *rushes up to cradle*)

ESTHER. (*rising defiantly*) What! part with my boy! I'd sooner die!

MAR. You can see him when you wish. As for money, I——

ESTHER. Not for ten thousand million worlds—not for ten thousand million marchionesses!

ECCLES. (R. *corner*) Better do what the good lady asks you, my dear; she's advising you for your own good, and for the child's likewise.

MAR. Surely you cannot intend to bring up my son's son in a place like this?

ESTHER. I do. (*goes up, to cradle*)

ECCLES. (R.) It *is* a poor place, and we are poor people, sure enough. We ought not to fly in the faces of our pastors and masters—our pastresses and mistresses

POLLY. (*aside*) Oh, hold your tongue, do!

(*up at cradle*)

ESTHER. (*before cradle*) Master George D'Alroy will remain with his mother. The offer to take him from her is an insult to his dead father and to him.

ECCLES. (*aside*) He don't seem to feel it, stuck-up little beast!

MAR. But you have no money—how can you rear him?—how can you educate him?—how can you live?

ESTHER. (*tearing dress from bandbox*) Turn columbine—go on the stage again and dance!

MAR. (*rising*) You are insolent—you forget that I am a lady.

ESTHER. You forget that I am a mother. Do you dare to offer to buy my child—*his* breathing image, *his* living memory—with money? (*crosses to door*, R., *and throws it open*) There is the door—go! (*picture*)

ECCLES. (*to* MARQUISE, *who has risen, aside*) Very sorry, my lady, as you should be tret in this way, which was not my wishes.

MAR. Silence! (ECCLES *retreats, putting back chair*, MARQUISE *goes up to door*, R.) Mrs. D'Alroy, if anything could have increased my sorrow for the wretched marriage my poor son was *decoyed* into, it would be your conduct this day to his mother. (*Exit*, R.D.)

ESTHER. (*falling in* POLLY'S *arms*) Oh, Polly! Polly!

ECCLES. (*looking after her*) To go away, and not to leave a sov. behind her! (*running up to open door*) Cat! Cat! Stingy old cat!

Almost runs to fire, L., *sits, and pokes it violently; carriage-wheels heard without.*

ESTHER. I'll go to my room and lie down. Let me have the baby, or that old woman may come back and steal him.

(*Exit* ESTHER *and* POLLY, *follows with the baby*, D.R.)

ECCLES. Well, women is the obstinatest devils as never wore horse-shoes. Children? Beasts! Beasts!

Enter SAM *and* POLLY, D.R.

SAM. (R.C.) Come along, Polly, and let's get it over at once. (SAM *places cap on piano and goes to* R. *of table* L. POLLY *takes bandbox from table, and places it up* L.H. *corner*) Now, Mr. Eccles (ECCLES *turns suddenly, facing*

SAM), since you've been talkin' on family matters, I'd like to 'ave a word with yer, so take this opportunity to——

ECCLES. (*waving his hand grandly*) Take what you like, and then order more (*rising, and leaning over table*), Samuel Gerridge. That hand is a hand that never turned its back on a friend, or a bottle to give him. (*sings, front of table*)

I'll stand by my friend,
I'll stand by my friend,
I'll stand by my friend,

If he'll stand to me—me, genelmen!

SAM. Well, Mr. Eccles, sir, it's this——

POLLY. (*aside, coming down*, R. *of* SAM) Don't tell him too sudden, Sam—it might shock his feelings.

SAM. It's this: Yer know that for the last four years I've been keepin' company with Mary—Polly.

Turning to her and smiling. ECCLES *drops into chair* R.C., *as if shot.*

ECCLES. Go it! go it! strike home, young man! Strike on this grey head! (*sings*) "Britons, strike home!" Here (*tapping his chest*), to my heart! Don't spare me. Have a go at my grey hairs. Pull 'em—pull 'em out! A long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together!

(*cries, and drops his face on arm, upon table*)

POLLY. (L. *of table*) Oh, father! I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world. (*patting his head*)

SAM. (R.) No; Mr. Eccles, I don't want to 'urt your feelin's, but I'm a-goin' to enter upon a business. Here's a circ'lar. (*offering one*)

ECCLES. (*indignantly*) Circ'lars. What are circ'lars compared to a father's feelings?

SAM. And I want Polly to name the day, sir, and so I ask you——

ECCLES. This is 'ard, this is 'ard. One of my daughters marries a soger. The other goes a-gasfitting.

SAM. (*annoyed*) The business which will enable me to maintain a wife is that of the late Mr. Binks, plumber, glazier, &c.

ECCLES. (*rising, sings. Air, "Lost Rosabelle."*)

"They have given thee to a plumber,
They have broken every vow,
They have given thee to a plumber,
And my heart, my heart is breaking now."

(*drops into chair again*)

Now, genelmen !

SAM *thrusts circulars into his pocket, and turns away angrily.*

POLLY. You know, father, you can come and see me. (*leans over him*, L.)

SAM. (*sotto voce*) No, no. (*motions to* POLLY)

ECCLES. (*looking up*) So I can, and that's a comfort. (*shaking her hand*) And you can come and see me, and that's a comfort. I'll come and see you often—very often—every day (SAM *turns up stage in horror*), and crack a fatherly bottle (*rising*) and shed a friendly tear.

Wipes eyes with dirty pocket-handkerchief, which he pulls from breast pocket.

POLLY. Do, father, do. (*goes up and gets tea-tray*)

SAM. (*with a gulp*) Yes, Mr. Eccles, do.

(*goes to* POLLY *and gesticulates behind tray*)

ECCLES. I will. (*goes* C.) And this it is to be a father. I would part with any of my children for their own good, readily—if I was paid for it. (*goes to* R. *corner; sings*) "For I know that the angels are whispering to me"—me, genelmen ! (POLLY *gets tea-things*)

SAM. (L. *of* ECCLES) I'll try and make Polly a good husband, and anything that I can do to prove it (*lowering his voice*), in the way of spirituous liquors and tobacco (*slipping coin into his hand, unseen by* POLLY) shall be done.

ECCLES. (*lightening up and placing his* L. *hand on* SAM'S *head*)

"Be kind to thy father,
Wherever you be,
For he is a blessing
And credit to thee—thee, genelmen.'

(*gets* C.) Well, my children—bless you, take the blessing of a grey 'air'd father. (POLLY *looking from one to the other.* ECCLES C. *to* SAM R.) Samuel Gerridge, she shall be thine. (*mock heroically, looking at money*) You shall be his wife (*looking at* POLLY), and you (*looking at* SAM), shall be her husband—for for a husband I know no fitter—no "gas-fitter" man. (*runs to piano and takes hat: goes to door* R., *looks comically pathetic at* SAM, R., *and* POLLY, L., *puts on hat and comes towards* C.) I've a friend waiting for me round the corner, which I want to have a word with; and may you never know how much more sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a marriageable daughter. (*sings*)

"When I heard she was married
I breathed not a tone,
The h'eyes of all round me
Was fixed on my h'own;
I flew to my chamber
To hide my despair,
I tore the bright circlet
Of gems from my hair.
When I heard she was married,
When I heard she was married—"

(*breaks down. Exit, door* R.)*

POLLY. (*drying her eyes*) There, Sam. I always told you that though father had his faults, his heart was in the right place.

SAM. Poor Polly.

(*crosses to fireplace,* L. *corner Knock at* R. *door*)

POLLY. (*top of table*) Come in!

Enter HAWTREE.

POLLY. Major Hawtree.

(SAM *turns away as they shake hands,* C. *of stage*)

HAW. (C.) I met the Marquise's carriage on the bridge. Has she been here?

(SAM *at fire, with back to it*)

POLLY. (L.C.) Yes.

HAW. What happened?

POLLY. Oh, she wanted to take away the child.

(*at head of table*)

SAM. In the coach. (POLLY *sets tea things*)

HAW. And what did Mrs. D'Alroy say to that?

SAM. Mrs. D'Alroy said that she'd see her blow'd first! (POLLY *pushes* SAM)—or words to that effect.

HAW. I'm sorry to hear this; I had hoped—however that's over.

POLLY. (*sitting* L. *of table*) Yes, it's over; and I hope we shall hear no more about it. Want to take away the child, indeed—like her impudence! What next! (*getting ready tea things*) Esther's gone to lie down. I shan't wake her up for tea, though she's had nothing to eat all day.

* This Exit was afterwards abandoned with the author's permission, being somewhat of an anti-climax. The Exit is usually made at the words "marriageable daughter," Eccles breaking down in a comically hysterical manner and going out quickly.

SAM. (*head of table*) Shall I fetch some shrimps?

POLLY. (L. *of table*) No. What made you think of shrimps?

SAM. They're a relish, and consolin'—at least I always found 'em so. (*check lights, gradually*)

POLLY. I won't ask you to take tea with us, major—you're too grand.

SAM *motions approbation to* POLLY, *not wanting* HAWTREE *to remain.*

HAW. (*placing hat on piano*) Not at all. I shall be most happy. (*aside*) 'Pon my word, these are very good sort of people. I'd no idea———

SAM. (*points to* HAWTREE, *who is* R.) He's a-going to stop to tea—well, I ain't.

Goes up to window and sits. HAWTREE *crosses and sits* R. *of table.*

POLLY. Sam! Sam! (*pause—he says* Eh?) Pull down the blind and light the gas.

SAM. (L. *of table*) No, don't light up; I like this sort of dusk. It's unbusiness-like, but pleasant.

SAM *cuts enormous slice of bread, and hands it on point of knife to* HAWTREE. *Cuts small lump of butter, and hands it on point of knife to* HAWTREE, *who looks at it through eye-glass, then takes it.* SAM *then helps himself.* POLLY *meantime has poured out tea in two cups, and one saucer for* SAM, *sugars them, and then hands cup and saucer to* HAWTREE, *who has both hands full. He takes it awkwardly, and places it on table.* POLLY, *having only one spoon, tastes* SAM'S *tea, then stirs* HAWTREE'S, *attracting his attention by so doing. He looks into his tea cup.* POLLY *stirs her own tea, and drops spoon into* HAWTREE'S *cup, causing it to spurt in his eye. He drops eye-glass and wipes his eyes.*

POLLY. (*making tea*) Sugar, Sam!

(SAM *takes tea and sits facing fire*)

POLLY. Oh, there isn't any milk—it'll be here directly it's just his time.

VOICE. (*outside; rattle of milk-pails*) Mia-oow!

POLLY. There he is. (*knock at door*, R.H.) Oh, I know; I owe him fourpence. (*feeling her pockets*) Sam, have you got fourpence? (*knock again, louder*)

SAM. No (*his mouth full*)—I ain't go no fourpence.

POLLY. He's very impatient. Come in!

Enter GEORGE, *his face bronzed, and in full health. He carries a milk-can in his hand, which, after putting his hat on piano, he places on table.*

GEO. A fellow hung this on the railings, so I brought it in.

POLLY *sees him, and gradually sinks down under the table* R. *Then* SAM, *with his mouth full, and bread and butter in hand, does the same,* L. HAWTREE *pushes himself back a space, in chair, remains motionless.* GEORGE *astonished. Picture.*

GEO. What's the matter with you?

HAW. (*rising*) George!

GEO. Hawtree! You here?

POLLY. (*under table*) O-o-o-o-oh! the ghost!—the ghost!

SAM. It shan't hurt you, Polly. Perhaps it's only indigestion.

HAW. Then you are not dead?

GEO. Dead, no. Where's my wife?

HAW. You were reported killed.

GEO. It wasn't true.

HAW. Alive! My old friend alive!

GEO. And well. (*shakes hands*) Landed this morning. Where's my wife?

SAM. (*who has popped his head from under table-cloth*) He ain't dead, Poll—he's alive!

(POLLY *rises from under table slowly*)

POLLY. (*pause; approaches him, touches him, retreats*) George! (*he nods*) George! George!

GEO. Yes! Yes!

POLLY. Alive!—My dear George!—Oh, my dear brother!—(*looking at him intensely*)—Alive!—(*going to him*) Oh, my dear, dear, brother!—(*in his arms*)—how could you go and do so? (*laughs hysterically*)

GEORGE, L.C.; HAWTREE, R. C.; SAM *down,* L.; GEORGE *places* POLLY *in his arms.* SAM *goes to* POLLY. SAM *kisses* POLLY'S *hand violently.* HAWTREE *comes up, stares—business.* SAM *goes* L. *with a stamp of his foot;* HAWTREE R.

GEO. Where's Esther?

HAW. Here—in this house.

GEO. Here!—doesn't she know I'm back?

POLLY. No; how should she?

GEO. (*to* HAWTREE) Didn't you get my telegram?

HAW. No ; where from ?

GEO. Southampton ! I sent it to the Club.

HAW. I haven't been there these three days.

POLLY. (*hysterically*) Oh, my dear, dear, dear dead-and-gone !—come back all alive oh, brother George !

(GEORGE *passes her down to* R.C.)

SAM. Glad to see yer, sir.

GEO. Thank you, Gerridge. (*shakes hands*) Same to you —but Esther ?

POLLY. (R.C.) (*back to audience, and 'kerchief to her eyes*) She's asleep in her room.

(GEORGE *is going to* D.R. ; POLLY *stops him*)

POLLY. You mustn't see her !

GEO. Not see her !—after this long absence ?—why not ?

HAW. She's ill to-day. She has been greatly excited. The news of your death, which we all mourned, has shaken her terribly.

GEO. Poor girl ! poor girl !

POLLY. (*down,* R.C.) Oh, we all cried so when you died ! —(*crying*)—and now you're alive again, I want to cry ever so much more ! (*crying*)

HAW. We must break the news to her gently and by degrees.

(*crosses behind, to fire, taking his tea with him*)

SAM. Yes. If you turn the tap on to full pressure, she'll explode !

SAM *turns to* HAWTREE, *who is just raising cup to his lips and brings it down on saucer with a bang ; both annoyed.*

GEO. To return, and not to be able to see her—to love her—to kiss her ! (*stamps*)

POLLY. Hush !

GEO. I forgot ! I shall wake her !

POLLY. More than that—you'll wake the baby !

GEO. Baby !—what baby ?

POLLY. Yours.

GEO. Mine ?——mine ?

POLLY. Yes——yours and Esther's! Why, didn't you know there was a baby ?

GEO. No !

POLLY. La ! the ignorance of these men !

HAW. Yes, George, you're a father. (*at fire-place*)

GEO. Why wasn't I told of this ? Why didn't you write ?

POLLY. How could we when you were dead?

SAM. And 'adn't left your address.

(*looks at* HAWTREE, *who turns away quickly*)

GEO. If I can't see Esther, I will see the child. The sight of me won't be too much for its nerves. Where is it?

POLLY. Sleeping in its mother's arms. (GEORGE *goes to door*, R.; *she intercepts him*) Please not! Please not!

GEO. I must. I will.

POLLY. It might kill her, and you wouldn't like to do that. I'll fetch the baby; but oh, please don't make a noise. (*going up*, R.) You won't make a noise—you'll be as quiet as you can, won't you? Oh! I can't believe it.

(*Exit* POLLY, R.D.)

SAM *dances break-down and finishes up looking at* HAWTREE, *who turns away astonished.* SAM *disconcerted; sits on chair* R.H. *of table* GEORGE *at door.*

GEO. My baby; my ba——It's a dream! You've seen it. (*to* SAM) What's it like?

SAM. Oh! it's like a -like a sort of—infant—white and —milky, and all that.

Enter POLLY, *with baby wrapped in shawls.* GEORGE *shuts door and meets her*, C.

POLLY. Gently, gently—take care! Esther will hardly have it touched. (SAM *rises and gets near to* GEORGE)

GEO. But I'm its father! (R.C.)

POLLY. That don't matter. She's very particular.

GEO. Boy or girl?

POLLY. Guess.

GEO. Boy! (POLLY *nods.* GEORGE *proud*) What's his name?

POLLY. Guess.

GEO. George? (POLLY *nods*) Eustace? (POLLY *nods*) Fairfax? Algernon? (POLLY *nods; pause*) My names!

SAM. (*to* GEORGE) You'd 'ardly think there was room enough in 'im to 'old so many names, would yer?

HAWTREE *looks at him—turns to fire.* SAM *disconcerted again; sits* R.C.

GEO. To come back all the way from India to find that I'm dead, and that you're alive. To find my wife a widow with a new love aged—How old are you? I'll buy you a pony to-morrow, my brave little boy! What's his weight? I should say two pound nothing. My—baby—my—boy!

(*bends over him and kisses him*) Take him away, Polly, for fear I should break him.

(POLLY *takes child, and places it in cradle*)

HAW. (*crosses to piano. Passes* SAM *front—stares—business.* SAM *goes round to fire-place, flings down bread and butter in a rage and drinks his tea out of saucer*) But tell us how it is you're back?—how you escaped?

(*leaning up against piano*)

GEO. (R.C., *coming down*) By-and-bye. Too long a story just now. Tell *me* all about it. (POLLY *gives him chair*, R.C.) How is it Esther's living here? (POLLY L. *of* GEORGE)

POLLY. She came back after the baby was born, and the furniture was sold up.

GEO. Sold up? What furniture?

POLLY. That you bought for her.

HAW. It couldn't be helped, George—Mrs. D'Alroy was so poor.

GEO. Poor! but I left her £600 to put in the bank!

HAW. We "*must*" tell you. She gave it to her father, who banked it in his own name.

SAM. (L.) And lost it in bettin'—every copper.

GEO. Then she's been in want?

POLLY. No—not in want. Friends lent her money.

GEO. (*seated*, R.C.) What friends? (*pause; he looks at* POLLY, *who indicates* HAWTREE) You?

POLLY. Yes.

GEO. (*rising, and shaking* HAWTREE'S *hand*) Thank you, old fella. (HAWTREE *droops his head*)

SAM. (*aside*) Now who'd ha' thought that long swell 'ad it in 'im? 'e never mentioned it.

GEO. So Papa Eccles had the money?

(*sitting* R.C. *again*)

SAM. And blued it! (*sits on* L. *corner off table*)

POLLY. (*pleadingly*) You see, father was very unlucky on the race-course. He told us that if it hadn't been that all his calculations were upset by a horse winning who had no business to, he should have made our fortunes. Father's been unlucky, and he gets tipsy at times, but he's a very clever man, if you only give him scope enough.

SAM. I'd give 'im scope enough!

GEO. Where is he now?

SAM. Public-house.

GEO. And how is he?

SAM. Drunk!

POLLY *pushes him off table.* SAM *sits at fire-place up stage.*

GEO. (*to* HAWTREE) You were right. There is "*something*" in caste. (*aloud*) But tell us all about it. (*sits*)

POLLY. Well, you know, you went away; and then the baby was born. Oh! he was such a sweet little thing, just like—your eyes——your hair.

(*standing* L. *of* GEORGE *who is sitting* R.C.)

GEO. Cut that!

POLLY. Well, baby came; and when baby was six days old, your letter came, Major (*to* HAWTREE). I saw that it was from India, and that it wasn't in your hand (*to* GEORGE); I guessed what was inside it, so I opened it unknown to her, and I read there of your capture and death. I daren't tell her. I went to father to ask his advice, but he was too tipsy to understand me. Sam fetched the doctor. He told us that the news would kill her. When she woke up, she said she had dreamt there was a letter from you. I told her, No; and day after day she asked for a letter. So the doctor advised us to write one as if it came from you. So we did. Sam and I and the doctor told her—told Esther, I mean, that her eyes were bad, and she mustn't read, and we read our letter to her; didn't we Sam? But, bless you! she always knew it hadn't come from you! At last, when she was stronger, we told her all.

GEO. (*after a pause*) How did she take it?

POLLY. She pressed the baby in her arms, and turned her face to the wall. (*a pause*) Well, to make a long story short, when she got up, she found that father had lost all the money you left her. There was a dreadful scene between them. She told him he'd robbed her and her child, and father left the house, and swore he'd never come back again.

SAM. Don't be alarmed—'e did come back.

(*sitting by fire* L.)

POLLY. Oh, yes; he was too good-hearted to stop long from his children. He has his faults, but his good points, when you find 'em, are wonderful!

SAM. Yes, when you find 'em!

Rises, gets bread and butter from table, and sits L. *corner of table.*

POLLY. So she had to come back here to us; and that's all.

GEO. Why didn't she write to my mother?

POLLY. Father wanted her; but she was too proud—she said she'd die first.

GEO. (*rising, to* HAWTREE) There's a woman! Caste's all humbug. (*sees sword over mantelpiece*) That's my sword (*crossing round,* L.), and a map of India, and that's the piano I bought her—I'll swear to the silk!

POLLY. Yes; that was bought in at the sale.

GEO. (*to* HAWTREE) Thank ye, old fella!

HAW. Not by me;—I was in India at the time.

GEO. By whom then? (GEORGE C.)

POLLY. By Sam. (SAM *winks to her to discontinue*) I shall! He knew Esther was breaking her heart about any one else having it, so he took the money he'd saved up for our wedding, and we're going to be married now—ain't we, Sam?

SAM. (*rushing to* GEORGE *and pulling out circulars from pocket*) And hope by constant attention to business to merit—— (POLLY *pushes him away to* L.)

POLLY. Since you died it hasn't been opened, but if I don't play it to-night, may I die an old maid?

Goes up. GEORGE *crosses to* SAM, *and shakes his hand, then goes up stage, pulls up blind, and looks into street.* SAM *turns up and meets* POLLY *top of table.*

HAW. (*aside*) Now who'd have thought that little cad had it in him? He never mentioned it. (*aloud*) *Apropos*, George, your mother—I'll go to the square, and tell her of—— (*takes hat from piano*)

GEO. Is she in town? (*at cradle*)

HAW. Yes. Will you come with me?

GEO. And leave my wife?—and such a wife!

HAW. I'll go at once. I shall catch her before dinner. Good-bye, old fellow. Seeing you back again, alive and well, makes me feel quite—that I quite feel—— (*shakes* GEORGE'S *hand. Goes to door, then crosses to* SAM, *who has turned* POLLY'S *tea into his saucer, and is just about to drink: seeing* HAWTREE, *he puts it down quickly, and turns his back*) Mr. Gerridge, I fear I have often made myself very offensive to you.

SAM. Well, sir, yer 'ave!

HAW. (*at bottom of table*) I feared so. I didn't know

you then. I beg your pardon. Let me ask you to shake hands—to forgive me, and forget it. (*offering his hand*)

SAM. (*taking it*) Say no more, sir; and if ever I've made myself offensive to you, I ask your pardon; forget it, and forgive me. (*they shake hands warmly; as* HAWTREE *crosses to door, recovering from* SAM'S *hearty shake of the hand,* SAM *runs to him*) Hi, sir! When yer marry that young lady as I know you're engaged to, if you should furnish a house, and require anything in my way——

Bringing out circular; begins to read it. POLLY *comes down,* L., *and pushes* SAM *away, against* HAWTREE. SAM *goes and sits in low chair by fire-place, down stage, disconcerted, cramming circulars into his pocket,*

HAW. Good-bye, George, for the present. (*at door*) Bye, Polly. (*resumes his Pall Mall manner as he goes out*) I'm off to the square. (*Exit* HAWTREE, R.D.)

GEO. (*at cradle*) But Esther?

POLLY. (*meets* GEORGE *in* C.) Oh, I forgot all about Esther. I'll tell her all about it. (R.C.U.S.)

GEO. How? (*by door*)

POLLY. I don't know; but it will come. Providence will send it to me, as it has sent you, my dear brother. (*embracing him*) You don't know how glad I am to see you back again! You must go. (*pushing him.* GEORGE *takes hat off piano*) Esther will be getting up directly. (*at door with* GEORGE, *who looks through keyhole*) It's no use looking there; it's dark.

GEO. (*at door*) It isn't often a man can see his own widow.

POLLY. And it isn't often that he wants to! Now, you must go. (*pushing him off*)

GEO. I shall stop outside

SAM. And I'll whistle for you when you may come in. (L.)

POLLY. Now—hush!

GEO. (*opening door wide*) Oh, my Esther, when you know I'm alive! I'll marry you all over again, and we'll have a second honeymoon, my darling. (*Exit*)

POLLY. Oh, Sam! Sam! (*commences to sing and dance.* SAM *also dances; they meet in* C. *of stage, join hands, and dance around two or three times, leaving* SAM L. *of* POLLY, *near table.* POLLY *going down,* R.) Oh, Sam, I'm so excited, I don't know what to do. What shall I do—what shall I do?

SAM. (*taking up* HAWTREE'S *bread and butter*) 'ave a bit of bread and butter, Polly.

POLLY. Now, Sam, light the gas; I'm going to wake her up. (*opening dooor*, R.H.) Oh, my darling, if I dare tell you! (*whispering*) He's come back! He's come back! He's come back! Alive! Alive! Alive! Sam, kiss me!

SAM *rushes to* POLLY, *kisses her, and she jumps off,* SAM *shutting the door.*

SAM. (*dances shuiter dance*) I'm glad the swells are gone; now I can open my safety valve and let my feelin's escape. To think of 'is comin' back alive from India, just as I am goin' to open my shop. Perhaps he'll get me the patronage of the Royal Family. It would look stunnin' over the door, a lion and a unicorn a-standin' on their 'ind legs, doin' nothin' furiously, with a lozenge between 'em—thus. (*seizes plate on table, puts his left foot on chair* R. *of table, and imitates the picture of the Royal arms*) Polly said I was to light up, and whatever Polly says must be done. (*lights brackets over mantel-piece, then candles; as he lights the broken one, says*) Why this one is for all the world like old Eccles! (*places candles on piano, and sits on music-stool*) Poor Esther! to think of my knowin' 'er when she was in the ballet line—then in the 'onourable line; then a mother—no, *h*onourables is "mammas"—then a widow, and then in the ballet line again!—and 'im to come back (*growing affected*)—and find a baby, with all 'is furniture and fittin's ready for immediate use (*crossing back of table during last few lines, sits in chair* L. *of table*)—and she, poor thing, lyin' asleep, with 'er eye-lids 'ot and swollen, not knowin' that that great, big, 'eavy, 'ulking, overgrown dragoon is prowlin' outside, ready to fly at 'er lips, and strangle 'er in 'is strong, lovin' arms—it—it—it——

(*breaks down and sobs with his head upon the table*)

Enter POLLY.

POLLY. Why, Sam! What's the matter?

SAM. (*rises and crosses*, R.) I dunno. The water's got into my meter.

POLLY. Hush! here's Esther.

Enter ESTHER, L.D. *They stop suddenly.* POLLY, *down stage.*

SAM. (R., *singing and dancing*) "Tiddy-ti-tum,' &c.

ESTHER. (*sitting near fire*, L. *of head of table, taking up*

costume and beginning to work) Sam, you seem in high spirits to-night?

SAM. Yes; yer see Polly and I are goin' to be married—and—and 'opes by bestowing a merit—to continue the favour——

POLLY. (*who has kissed* ESTHER *two or three times*) What are you talking about?

SAM. I don't know—I'm off my burner.

Brings music-stool, R.C. POLLY *goes round to chair* L. *corner, facing* ESTHER.

ESTHER. What's the matter with you to-night, dear? (*to* POLLY) I can see something in your eyes.

SAM. P'r'aps it's the new furniture!

(*sits on music-stool* R.)

ESTHER. Will you help me with the dress, Polly?

They sit, ESTHER *upper end, back of table*, POLLY *facing her, at lower end.*

POLLY. (*seated*, L. *of table*) It was a pretty dress when it was new—not unlike the one Mdlle. Delphine used to wear. (*suddenly clapping her hands*) Oh!

ESTHER. What's the matter?

POLLY. A needle! (*crosses to* SAM, *who examines finger*) I've got it!

SAM. What—the needle—in your finger?

POLLY. No; an idea in my head!

SAM. (*still looking at finger*) Does it 'urt?

POLLY. (C) Stupid! (SAM *still sitting on stool. Aloud*) Do you recollect Mdlle. Delphine, Esther?

ESTHER. Yes.

POLLY. Do you recollect her in that ballet that old Herr Griffenhaagen arranged?—Jeanne la Folle, or, the Return of the Soldier?

ESTHER. Yes; will you do the fresh hem?

POLLY. What's the use? Let me see—how did it go? How well I remember the scene!—the cottage was on that side, the bridge at the back—then ballet of villagers, and the entrance of Delphine as Jeanne, the bride—tra-lal-lala-lala-la-la, (*sings and pantomimes*, SAM *imitating her*) Then the entrance of Claude, the bridegroom—(*to* SAM, *imitating swell*) How-de-do, how-de-do?

SAM. (*rising*) 'ow are yer?

(*imitating* POLLY, *then sitting again*)

POLLY. Then there was the procession to church—the march of the soldiers over the bridge—(*sings and pantomimes*)—arrest of Claude, who is drawn for the conscription (*business;* ESTHER *looks dreamily*), and is torn from the arms of his bride, at the church porch. *Omnes* broken-hearted. *This is Omnes* broken-hearted. (*pantomimes*)

ESTHER. Polly, I don't like this; it brings back memories.

POLLY. (*going to table, and leaning her hands on it, looks over at* ESTHER) Oh, fuss about memories!—one can't mourn for ever. (ESTHER *surprised*) Everything in this world isn't sad. There's bad news, and—and there's good news sometimes—when we least expect it.

ESTHER. Ah! not for me.

POLLY. Why not?

ESTHER. (*anxiously*) Polly!

POLLY. Second Act! (*this to be said quickly, startling* SAM, *who has been looking on the ground during last four or five lines*) Winter—the Village Pump. This is the village pump (*pointing to* SAM, *seated by piano, on music-stool.* SAM *turns round on music-stool, disgusted*) Entrance of Jeanne—now called Jeanne la Folle, because she has gone mad on account of the supposed loss of her husband.

SAM. The supposed loss?

POLLY. The supposed loss!

ESTHER. (*dropping costume*) Polly!

SAM. Mind! (*aside to* POLLY)

POLLY. Can't stop now! Entrance of Claude, *who isn't dead*, in a captain's uniform—a cloak thrown over his shoulders.

ESTHER. Not dead?

POLLY. Don't you remember the ballet? Jeanne is mad, and can't recognise her husband; and don't, till he shows her the ribbon she gave him when they were betrothed! A bit of ribbon! Sam, have you got a bit of ribbon? Oh, that crape sword-knot, that will do!

(*crosses down*, R.C. SAM *astonished*)

ESTHER. Touch that! (*rising, and coming down*, L.C.)

POLLY. Why not?—it's no use *now!*

ESTHER. (*slowly, looking into* POLLY'S *eyes*) You have heard of George—I know you have—I see it in your eyes. You may tell me—I can bear it—I can indeed—indeed I can. Tell me—he is not dead? (*violently agitated*)

POLLY. No!

ESTHER. No?

POLLY. No!

ESTHER. (*whispers*) Thank Heaven! (SAM *turns on stool, back to audience*) You've seen him—I see you have!—I know it!—I feel it! I had a bright and happy dream—I saw him as I slept! Oh, let me know if he is near! Give me some sign—some sound—(POLLY *opens piano*)—some token of his life and presence!

SAM *touches* POLLY *on the shoulder, opens piano, takes hat and exits,* D.R. *All to be done very quickly.* POLLY *sits immediately at piano and plays air softly—the same air played by* ESTHER *Act. II., on the treble only.*

ESTHER. (*in an ecstacy*) Oh, my husband! come to me! for I know that you are near! Let me feel your arms clasp round me!—Do not fear for me!—I can bear the sight of you!—(*door opens showing* SAM *keeping* GEORGE *back*)—it will not kill me!——George—love—husband—come, oh, come to me!

GEORGE *breaks away from* SAM, *and coming down behind* ESTHER *places his hands over her eyes; she gives a faint scream, and turning, falls in his arms.* POLLY *plays the bass as well as treble of the air, forte, then fortissimo. She then plays at random, endeavouring to hide her tears. At last strikes piano wildly, and goes off into a fit of hysterical laughter, to the alarm of* SAM, *who, rushing down as* POLLY *cries "Sam! Sam!" falls on his knees in front of her. They embrace,* POLLY *pushing him contemptuously away afterwards.* GEORGE *gets chair* R.C., *sits, and* ESTHER *kneels at his feet—he snatches off* ESTHER'S *cap, and throws it up stage.* POLLY *goes* L. *of* GEORGE, SAM *brings music-stool, and she sits.*

ESTHER. To see you here again—to feel your warm breath upon my cheek—is it real, or am I dreaming?

SAM. (R., *rubbing his head*) No; it's real.

ESTHER. (*embracing* GEORGE) My darling!

SAM. My darling! POLLY *on music-stool, which* SAM *has placed for her.* SAM, *kneeeling by her, imitates* ESTHER—POLLY *scornfully pushes him away*) But tell us—tell us how you escaped

George. It's a long story; but I'll condense it. I was riding out, and suddenly found myself surrounded and taken prisoner. One of the troop that took me was a fella who had been my servant, and to whom I had done some little kindness. He helped me to escape, and hid me in a sort of cave, and for a long time used to bring me food. Unfortunately, he was ordered away; so he brought another Sepoy to look after me. I felt from the first this man meant to betray me, and I watched him like a lynx during the one day he was with me. As evening drew on, a Sepoy picket was passing. I could tell by the look in the fella's eyes, he meant to call out as soon as they were near enough; so I seized him by the throat, and shook the life out of him.

Esther. (l.) You strangled him?

Geo. Yes.

Esther. Killed him—dead?

Geo. He didn't get up again. (*embraces* Esther)

Polly. (*to* Sam) You never go and kill Sepoys. (*pushes him over*)

Sam. No! I pay rates and taxes.

Geo. The day after, Havelock and his Scotchmen marched through the village, and I turned out to meet them. I was too done up to join, so I was sent straight on to Calcutta. I got leave, took a berth on the P. and O. boat; the passage restored me. I landed this morning, came on here, and brought in the milk.

Enter the Marquise, r.d.; *she rushes to embrace* George, c. *All rise,* Sam *putting piano stool back* r. Polly *and* Sam r.h. *corner,* Esther *in front of table* l.

Mar. My dear boy!—my dear, dear boy!

Polly. Why, see, she's crying! She's glad to see him alive, and back again.

Sam. (*profoundly*) Well! There's always some good in women, even when they're ladies. (*goes up to window*)

Polly *puts dress in box, and goes to cradle, then beside* Sam.

Mar. (*crossing to* Esther. l.c.) My dear daughter, we must forget our little differences. (*kissing her*) Won't you? How history repeats itself! You will find a similar and as unexpected a return mentioned by Froissart in the chapter that treats of Philip Dartnell——

GEO. Yes, mother—I remember. (*kisses her*)

MAR. (*to* GEORGE, *aside*) We must take her abroad, and make a lady of her.

GEO. (R.C.) Can't, mamma—she's ready-made. Nature has done it to our hands.

MAR. (L.C. ; *aside, to* GEORGE) But I won't have the man who smells of putty (SAM *business at back. He is listening, and at the word "putty" throws his cap irritably on table* R. *of him.* POLLY *pacifies him, and makes him sit down beside her on window*) nor the man who smells of beer.

Goes to ESTHER, *who offers her chair, and sits in chair opposite to her.* MARQUISE *back to audience.* ESTHER *facing audience.*

Enter HAWTREE, *pale.*

HAW. George! Oh, the Marchioness is here.

GEO. What's the matter?

HAW. (R.) Oh, nothing. Yes, there is. I don't mind telling you. I've been thrown. I called at my chambers as I came along and found this.

(*gives* GEORGE *a note ; sits on music-stool*)

GEO. From the Countess, Lady Florence's mother. (*reads*) "Dear Major Hawtree,—I hasten to inform you that my daughter Florence is about to enter into an alliance with Lord Saxeby, the eldest son of the Marquis of Loamshire. Under these circumstances, should you think fit to call here again, I feel assured——" Well, perhaps it's for the best. (*returning letter*) Caste! you know. Caste! And a marquis is a bigger swell than a major.

HAW. Yes, best to marry in your own rank of life.

GEO. If you can find *the* girl. But if ever you find *the* girl, marry her. As to her station—

"True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

HAW. Ya-as. But a gentleman should hardly ally himself to a nobody.

GEO. My dear fella, Nobody's a mistake—he don't exist. Nobody's nobody! Everybody's somebody.

HAW. Yes. But still—Caste.

GEO. Oh, Caste's all right. Caste is a good thing if it's not carried too far. It shuts the door on the pretentious and the vulgar : but it should open the door very wide for

exceptional merit. Let brains break through its barriers, and what brains can break through love may leap over.

Haw. Yes. Why George, your're quite inspired—quite an orator. What makes you so brilliant? Your captivity? The voyage? What then?

Geo. I'm in love with my wife!

Enter Eccles, *drunk, a bottle of gin in his hand.*

Eccles. (*crossing to* c.) Bless this 'appy company. May we 'ave in our arms what we love in our 'earts (*goes to head of table.* Esther *goes to cradle, back to audience.* Polly *and* Sam *half amused, half angry.* Marquise *still sitting in chair, back to audience.* Hawtree *facing* Eccles. George *up stage leaning on piano in disgust*) Polly, fetch wine-glasses—a tumbler will do for me. Let us drink a toast. Mr. Chairman (*to* Marquise), ladies, and gentlemen —I beg to propose the 'elth of our newly returned warrior, *my son-in-law.* (Marquise *shivers*) The Right Honourable George De Alroy. Get glasses, Polly, and send for a bottle of sherry wine for my ladyship. *My* ladyship! My ladyship! M'lad'ship. (*she half turns to him*) You and me'll have a drain together on the quiet. So delighted to see you under these altered circum—circum—circum—stangate.

Polly, *who has shaken her head at him to desist, in vain, very distressed.*

Sam. Shove 'is 'ead in a bucket!

(*Exit, in disgust, door* r.)

Haw. (*aside to* George) I think I can abate this nuisance—at least, I can remove it.

Rises and crosses c., *to* Eccles, *who has got round to* r. *side of table, leaning on it. He taps* Eccles *with his stick, first on* r. *shoulder, then on* l., *and finally sharply on* r. Eccles *turns round and falls on point of stick*—Hawtree *steadying him.* George *crosses behind, to* Marquise, *who has gone to cradle—puts his arm round* Esther *and takes her to mantelpiece.*

Haw. Mr. Eccles, don't you think that, with your talent for liquor, if you had an allowance of about two pounds a week, and went to Jersey, where spirits are cheap, that you could drink yourself to death in a year?

ECCLES. I think I could—I'm sure I'll try.

Goes up, L. *of table, steadying himself by it, and sits in chair by fire, with the bottle of gin.* HAWTREE *standing by fire.* ESTHER *and* POLLY *stand embracing*, C. *As they turn away from each other*—

GEO. (*coming across with* ESTHER) Come and play me that air that used to ring in my ears as I lay awake, night after night, captive in the cave—you know.

(*he hands* ESTHER *to piano. She plays the air*)

MAR. (*bending over the cradle, at end*, R.) My grandson!

ECCLES *falls off the chair in the last stage of drunkenness, bottle in hand.* HAWTREE, *leaning one foot on chair from which* ECCLES *has fallen, looks at him through eye-glass.* SAM *enters, and goes to* POLLY, B.C., *behind cradle, and, producing wedding-ring from several papers, holds it up before her eyes.* ESTHER *plays until curtain drops.*

SAM. POLLY.

CRIB.

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SAM GERRIDGE WIPES THE GOWN OF POLLY (MISS MAY HARVEY).

Photo by Window and Grove, Baker Street, W.

see that Mr. Tapp, Demo-
cratic candidate for Mayor of Wichita, Kansas, says that, if elected, he will fine every female wearing bloomers. He believes in the skirt as a cycling-garment. Away on the other side of the world, however, the police of St. Petersburg have decreed that the skirt is dangerous not only to the lady cyclist, but to the public in general.

So there is a law that no lady shall
Russian capital except in the bifurca
that in "the land of the free" ladies a
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The Sheen House Club have fathe
bicycle-polo. As polo shows indicatio
well that a club like the Sheen shoul
construction of a special machine.
bicycles in polo are the breaking of s
ball, the buckling of the front wheel,
In the case of the Sheen House bicy
jointless tandem rims, and the spokes a
at both ends. To prevent strain on th
have adopted patent fore-fork stays, w
strengthen the forks in the case of heav
to get a really strong mount, bicycl
luxury. It isn't every man who cares

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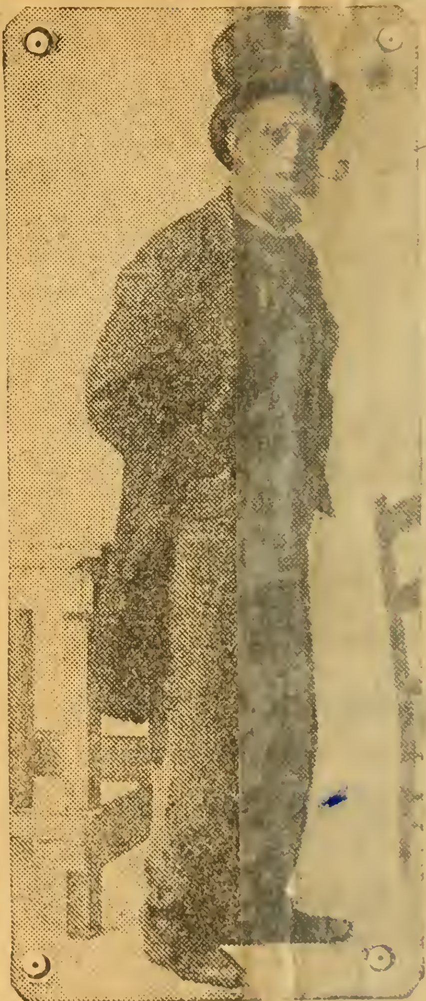

SIR JOHN HARE,
As "Eccles," in "Caste."

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